



## 50 YEARS AGO

With Bobby Fischer making demand after demand, complaint after complaint, it was a miracle that the World Championship, held in Reykjavik 50 years ago, not only got off the ground but was successfully played out to the bitter end. No wonder this exciting USA vs. USSR encounter was dubbed the match of the century.

# “I CAN’T GET NO SATISFACTION!”



By Jimmy Adams



FIDE Master **Jimmy Adams** has edited, compiled, translated, written, or produced hundreds of chess books, magazines, bulletins or articles during his publishing career, but he says he has never been happier than working as a Deputy Editor for ACM!

For six weeks over the summer of 1972, thanks to a personal recommendation by UK’s leading chess journalist and former British champion Leonard Barden – columnist for the *Guardian*, *Evening Standard*, *Financial Times* and *Field*, as well as chess presenter for BBC TV chess programs – I had the great pleasure of playing a small part in the Bobby Fischer versus Boris Spassky match!

The Ray Davies Sports Agency, operating from a luxury apartment in London’s Mayfair, had an exclusive contract to receive the moves from Reykjavik as they were played. There was no internet in those days, so the unsung heroine was the hard-working agency secretary, Kathy Blaker, who handled the constant onward distribution of chess moves to numerous media outlets by teleprinter, which involved hours and hours of long number dialling – a job that required great concentration, organization



and patience especially when lines of communication were busy. As she was not a chess player, Kathy had obtained a big chess set from a nearby store and labeled all the squares so she could correctly place the pieces on the board and keep pace with the game in progress.

In this way the agency became a nerve center for feeding the press, news agencies, radio and TV, which included the BBC, who, apart from reporting the event in its daily news bulletins, also ran a live chess program every Sunday featuring a round-up of the week's play, game demonstrations and interviews with guest chess masters.

I had known Leonard, who played a major role in the BBC program, since my junior days and, having read my epic 200-line poem 'The Bobby Fischer Story', he invited me to fill the vacancy when a non-chess AP journalist pulled out of the reporting of the match after a couple of games. Fortunately I was able to get to Mayfair just before the start of play, after skipping lunchtime and leaving my day job early, so for Kathy and myself I guess you could say we were both committed to working overtime all through the summer holiday period – but we enjoyed it!

My task was to make sure the moves were correct and to add game commentaries, often based on information obtained from experts in Reykjavik. These moves and comments were also regularly supplied by bike in small batches to the nearby subterranean Notre Dame Hall in Leicester Square, the heart of London's theater and cinema land, where live demonstrations of the days' games were conducted by British master players in front of enthusiastic crowds. The choice of this location, a giant crypt under the historic Notre Dame church, was not made by chance as it was the venue for the venerable Athenaeum Chess Club, whose prominent member, 1970 British champion, Bob Wade, had compiled valuable opening files on Spassky, and indeed Fischer's preceding opponents in the Candidates matches, to facilitate Bobby's preparation. Bob even showed me a grateful handwritten letter he had received which read: "Dear Mr Wade, You did a great job on the Taimanov files... Best regards Bobby Fischer." Incidentally, Notre Dame Hall could seat up to 300 persons and

Working hours and hours overtime in a London Sports Agency, unsung heroine Kathy Blaker kept the world media informed of the match, move by move, by telex...



...including Shelby Lyman whose live PBS TV broadcasts, watched by a record number of viewers, made him a celebrity in his own right.



was also hired out for concerts – even the Rolling Stones played there in the early 60s, which seemed appropriate in view of Bobby's never-ending series of complaints and demands, thereby somehow echoing Mick Jagger's big hit *I can't get no satisfaction*.

Similarly, for U.S. audiences, the moves were sent – almost live – to PBS Channel 13 for Shelby Lyman's televised game commentaries, which attracted millions of viewers, even through the windows of department stores! Shelby was formerly a university lecturer in sociology but by the time of the match

he had become a full time chess teacher and one of his students, a TV executive, helped him get the Fischer-Spassky job. He then rapidly became a celebrity in his own right by virtue of his popular down-to-earth game demonstrations which everyone from novice to expert could appreciate. After the match, the fact that he was also a highly rated active player led him to a career as a lifelong chess journalist, with his columns being syndicated throughout the States to more than 80 newspapers.

So from Leicester Square in London to Times Square in New York, the latest news, views and moves on the match not only transfixed chess players but also the general public. Never before had a chess contest gained such huge worldwide publicity and even nowadays people still talk and write about this great East vs. West confrontation.

Well over a hundred books have been published in many languages covering the Reykjavik match in one way or another, two of my own favorites being the so-called 'instant' books by Svetozar Gligoric and Harry Golombek, who were both present throughout the match in a journalistic capacity and so were able to provide a day-to-day diary of the many happenings both on and off the chessboard. Other fine analytical books on the match are those by Hugh Alexander, Cecil Purdy, Robert Byrne/



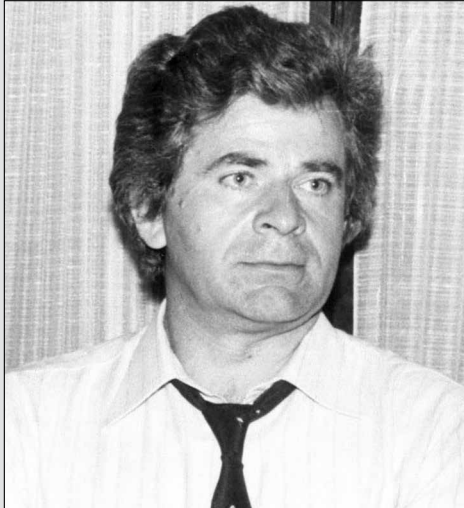
Iivo Nei, Max Euwe/Jan Timman and Larry Evans/Ken Smith, while *Bobby Fischer goes to War* by David Edmonds/John Eidenow, *Endgame* by Frank Brady and the recently published *The Match of All Time*, by chief organizer and Icelandic Chess President Gudmundur Thorarinsson, add much background descriptive text. In fact, turning the pages of such books, in conjunction with watching video footage, is like having a ringside seat in Reykjavik and seeing the drama unfold before your very eyes.

And talking of videos, at least two high class documentaries have appeared in English: the first was an episode in the BBC's *Clash of the Titans* series, dedicated to great sporting rivalries, while a decade or so later, in 2011, a 90-minute film *Bobby Fischer against the World*, focusing on the match as well as Bobby's life, was released for cinema and later on DVD, resulting in great reviews at the Sundance Film Festival. It is designed not only for chess players but also for viewers who have little or no knowledge of the game, with its cast carefully chosen to cover many aspects of the life and character of this most enigmatic and fascinating of all world champions.

Both of the above mentioned films have served as an inspiration for this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary article as in some ways they were complementary. In particular, Spassky did not feature in *Bobby Fischer against the World* but he did in *Clash of the Titans* so the addition of some of his comments makes very revealing reading. For example:

"You would think that being World Champion would make you happy that you're the very, very best. But with me, things were somehow the other way around. My years as champion were the unhappiest years of my life, because I felt a huge responsibility. After all, I lived in a communist state but I was not a communist. It really was a great burden. In Russia they have a saying that the shapka Monomakha weighs heavily. The shapka Monomakha is the Tsar's crown. And I felt it quite heavily."

Celebrated American filmmaker Liz Garbus and her editors certainly had their work cut out selecting footage amassed from a huge amount of research

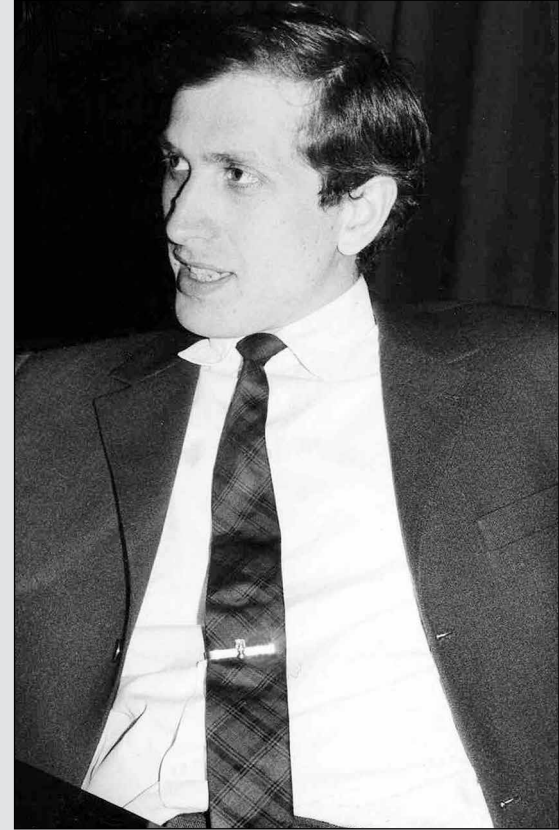


"The first game is always a very nerve-wracking experience for everyone. And during the game your pulse very often rises to about 160, even if you have a healthy heart. On average your pulse is 40. Mine at that moment was around 55. I was physically quite strong, not an athlete, but just generally healthy. But my nerves – that was another matter."

for *Bobby Fischer against the World*. Yet, just like Fischer when selecting his next chess move, they sifted through the volume of material to identify what really mattered. This gives the final product a clarity and apparent simplicity when charting the course of Bobby's life, just like we see in his best chess games.

Bobby Fischer was likened to Muhammad Ali in the way he demolished his opponents. Indeed, on the road to Reykjavik, Taimanov and Larsen suffered 6-0 knockouts, Petrosian was stopped in round nine to save him from further punishment after losing four consecutive games and only Boris Spassky went the distance (well, almost) but lost heavily on points.

They say dedication is not enough to take you to the top, you need obsession – an assertion repeated in the film by Malcolm Gladwell, author of the book *Outliers: The secret of success*, that to achieve major success in fields of endeavor such as art, music, sport, etc., you have first to put in 10,000 hours of practice. But, in fact, Bobby Fischer went beyond all this: he was not merely obsessed, he was possessed by chess – and he had done his 10,000 hours before he was even a teenager. No wonder he "just got good" at the age of 12. "Chess is my alter ego – it's



"The Russians are the ones who started all this and they are the ones who have been using chess as a propaganda weapon and using every trick to keep the title and all. You know, military might, intellectual might... Now the intellectual bit has finally turned against them and they probably wished they'd never started to play chess because years of propaganda have been offset by this one thing."

hard to take them apart" he says in the film. Indeed he truly believed he had been chosen to capture the world title from the Russians.

Liz Garbus' fast moving and intense documentary boldly takes up the challenge of piecing together the fragile and fractured components that enabled the lone warrior from Brooklyn to rise from poverty and capture the world chess crown, which the Soviet Union had claimed as their own for nearly a quarter of a century. Richly illustrated with both still and moving pictures, it covers Bobby's whole life from teenage prodigy to all-American hero, fugitive in exile and premature death in Iceland.

Regina Fischer was a single mother who was so busy working, studying and involving herself in peace protests and the like, that she had precious little time to devote to her kids. She



WEATHER :  
Sunny.  
Lighting-up time :  
9.50 p.m.  
Details—Back Page.

# Evening Standard

CLOSING  
PRICES

46.039

London: Monday July 3 1972

7RR

3p

## City tycoon challenges reluctant chess champ 'CHICKEN!' £50,000 BAIT FOR FISCHER



City financier and chess player, Jim Slater, did not want insufficient prize money to be an impediment to Fischer playing the match so he added £50,000 to the kitty. "Now come out and play, Chicken!"

was also a communist sympathizer, continually tracked by the FBI, which must have played its part in developing a sense of paranoia in the young Bobby. Added to this was the fact that her son didn't know who his real father was – a traumatic subject he always refused to talk about. Since Bobby's sister, Joan, also took her academic studies very seriously, this left a lonesome Bobby, who disliked school intensely, immersing himself in the playing of chess and reading of chess literature to the point of monomania. To set the right tone, the documentary shows striking images of a pre-teen Bobby studying chess late at night on the kitchen table of their rather shabby apartment, while Regina is sheepishly peeking at him through a barely open door, and another where he is even analyzing on a chessboard in the bath!



**"First of all he wanted more money. James Slater doubled the stakes but then Bobby wanted more of the profits from the TV, film and the rights. He always wanted one thing more. He was always very hard to deal with. Always wanted that extra pair of pants, no matter what he got."**

*Larry Evans*



The natural consequence was that Bobby was driven to win the world championship – and in the film we rapidly race ahead to 1972, where Dr Anthony Saidy provides a tension

filled, delay by delay, eye witness account of what is surely the longest period of pre-match nerves in sporting history. For weeks Bobby was in a state of indecision whether even to go to Reykjavik and so in the meantime Saidy had accommodated him at his father's house – after all, Long Island is nearer to Iceland than Pasadena! Demand after demand, excuse after excuse...and even when Saidy finally got Bobby to JFK airport to board the plane to Reykjavik, the sight of a newspaper photographer had the would-be champion sprinting out of the terminal.

Bobby's lawyer, Paul Marshall explained: "He was looking at it from every angle. Why was it in Reykjavik? What were the playing conditions going to be like? Was the money really going to be paid? Would they take any unfair advantage? And he was concerned about it. It was a seminal moment in his life, the world championship, he worked like hell to get there."

Nevertheless, as described and depicted in the film, a doubling of the prize fund thanks to the generosity of British city tycoon Jim Slater, together with the taunt "Now come out and play, Chicken!" plus a phone call from Secretary of State, Dr Kissinger, telling him, once and for all, "Go!", persuaded Bobby to turn up for the first game, albeit 14 days later than scheduled, as he saw his participation "was a matter of national prestige" (as well as \$150,000 in prize money). Interestingly, much later when looking back on his life, Mr. Slater did not even include his contribution to the Fischer-Spassky match amongst his top ten lifetime achievements, which in fact were instead dominated by his support of humanitarian causes.

But it was not only Fischer who was suffering from anxiety, Spassky was too: "I sensed that my nerves were shredded. And when your nerves are gone, it's like being in a car when the electrics have failed. You just can't do anything. And so I had this subconscious premonition that something was going wrong with me. But I had to put this feeling to one side because I had no other choice. I had to play the match. I didn't feel, for instance, that I was defending a political system which stood in opposition to another political system, I always considered myself a chess king."



And so, on to the film's coverage of the first match game where we have slow motion footage, repeated for dramatic effect, of Bobby's ill-fated capture of the h2 pawn. On-screen analysis shows how his bishop is trapped – but of course no mention is made of the later deep analysis revealing that the endgame was still a draw even after the bishop is lost. This is chess theater designed for the general public – not a ChessBase DVD for a specialist audience – and succeeds in re-creating the competitive atmosphere of actual chess play. As Spassky said later: "Fischer's style was always to be on the offensive. Here he was in a passive position. If he had just held that position, he'd have got a draw. He wanted to change the course of the battle at any cost and to do that was very risky. That is why he lost that game."

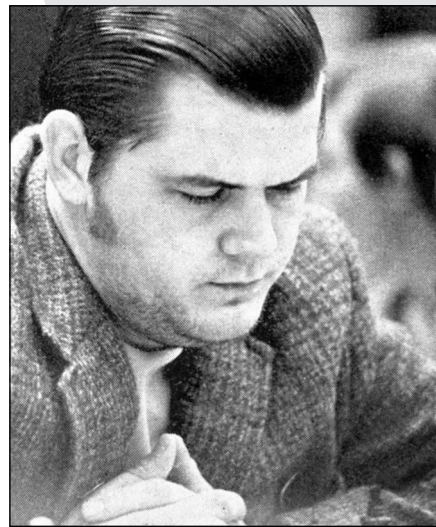
This is followed by more pre-game nerves – even after the match has started – with Bobby failing to turn up for Game Two because the cameras have not been removed as he demanded. He is disturbed by the sound of the rolling film, and loses by default, although arbiter Lothar Schmid tells us movingly that after making the decision to forfeit Bobby he woke up with tears in his eyes in the middle of the night because he felt he had destroyed a genius. Again we have great footage of Spassky, immaculately dressed in a three piece suit, patiently sitting at the board, but waiting in vain for Fischer to show up.

This was an extremely delicate moment and here the match might well have come to an abrupt end. After not getting his own way, an enraged Fischer demanded to be taken to the airport, he was going home. But his second, William Lombardy, had the presence of mind to rip out the magneto wiring from their courtesy car while Bobby was on his way down from his hotel room. Bobby gets in the car, Bill turns the key. No sound, not even for Bobby's acute hearing. "What's the matter?" asks Fischer. "The car won't start!" says the Reverend Lombardy, shrugging his shoulders. So...back to the hotel room. This gives time for lawyer Paul Marshall to convince Bobby that it is in his best interests to say sorry and continue playing. As Robert Byrne says: "They brainwashed him. They wouldn't let him sleep. They kept him walking the floor and explaining to him why he



Without Anthony Saidy's help Bobby may have never left the U.S. for Reykjavik...

...and without William Lombardy's persuasion Bobby may have never stayed in Reykjavik!



had to play, why it was in his own best interests to play."

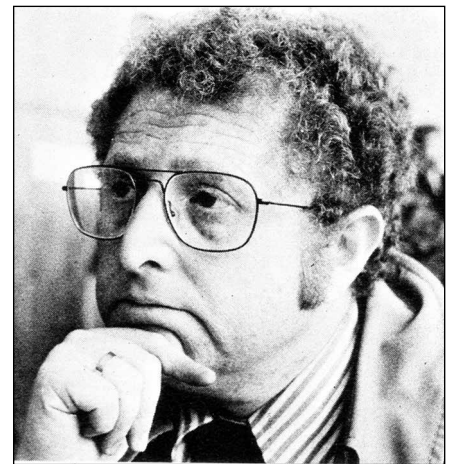
Bobby eventually agrees – and even to play the match for no money, for the sheer love of the game! Marshall will deal with that crazy idea later, but first he has to handle the angry Russian contingent who want to go home, after claiming a win in the match of course, because of Bobby's never ending demands. Marshall's master stroke was then to tell them: "So you want tomorrow's headlines to read 'Bobby comes and Russia runs!'" The match was saved...at least until the next crisis.

After more heated discussion, a fragile agreement was reached to move

the third game backstage to a quieter area normally used for table tennis and away from all spectators. Spassky explained what happened next: "Game Three took place in a small room where a camera, a video camera, had been set up opposite the chessboard. When the time came to start play, the main referee, Lothar Schmid, said something along the lines of 'Gentlemen, it's time to start the game' and at that moment Bobby said 'Aaargh! The camera is too loud. I don't want to play. And he started wrangling with Schmid who at some point said that five minutes had already gone by. Bobby said to him 'Aaargh, shut up!' And I think it was at that very moment that I lost the match. Because if then I had said: 'Gentlemen, I don't like these conditions and I don't want to start play with them. I shall forfeit this game, but I'm ready to continue playing the fourth game under normal conditions in the main hall. But because I had promised to play this game, I didn't do this. And I played it like a rabbit caught in the gaze of a boa-constrictor. That was the first game I ever lost to Fischer."

Later Spassky even added "What a fool I was!"

In fact this game featured Fischer's ...♘h5 move in a Benoni, allowing ♗e2xh5, leaving ugly doubled h-pawns after ...gxf5 which spoiled his kingside castled position, at least for the time being. In the film the bright and breezy Susan Polgar makes a comment about the fact that the move also neglects the centre, while Saidy quotes the maxim 'A knight on the side I will not abide;' but the funny thing is that Bobby didn't really neglect the center. In fact later on in the game he conducted a victorious attack and in the final position where Spassky resigned he could have checkmated the Russian's king – from the e5 square! Although the whole concept of ...♘h5 was considered something of a sensation at the time, a contemporary game played between Timman and Ljubojevic featured something similar, albeit in a kindred variation of the Benoni. Then again, a comparable idea, equally gaining light square control, appears in an older game which may have been embedded deep in Fischer's mind, played by Boleslavsky against Szabo some twenty years earlier, especially as it is featured in *Boleslavsky's Selected Games*, one of



...which proved very costly for businessman Chester Fox.

Opening was so strong! No wonder he also played it against Spassky. Okay, just kidding, in fact Panno had not shown up as a protest against what he considered an unfair rescheduling of the game. Nevertheless, since Bobby had previously played 1.c4 also in a game against Polugaevsky it had to be taken into account by the Russians. Interestingly, in 1967, when Fischer withdrew from the Sousse Interzonal, while leading, Najdorf was asked by a despairing journalist “When will Bobby Fischer be world champion?” To which came the reply “When he starts to play 1.d4!” – alluding more to Bobby’s maturity than the move itself, but a curiously prophetic remark as Game Six rapidly transposed into the Queen’s Gambit. As Larry Evans says in the film: “What can I say? It was a beautiful game – a model of precision.” Praise indeed from a grandmaster who knew Fischer as well as anybody and who was by no means always complimentary towards him.

Nevertheless, it seems again Spassky forgot his preparation. In the Tartakower variation of the Queen’s Gambit, Geller had suggested a pawn sacrifice on move 14 which would not only have neutralized White’s initiative but enabled a strong counterattack. Indeed the following year Geller unleashed his novelty against Timman at the AVRO tournament in Hilversum and scored a crushing win! So, he was left wondering why Spassky did not follow his recommendation.

Bobby’s favorite Russian books. How do I know that? Well, when I learned of Fischer’s respect for Boleslavsky, I was encouraged to produce an expanded version of this book in English, which to my amazement won the British Chess Federation Book of the Year Award in the 1980s!

Curiously, Saidy remarks in the movie that “In Game Three Bobby played an opening, a defense he had never played before – the Benoni which means ‘son of sorrow.’ It is so risky, so fraught with danger that whenever you play that you’re simply saying we are not going to make a draw, this is win or lose, this is a fight to the death.” Well that is mostly true but in reality Bobby had repeatedly played the Benoni, including as recently as against Gligoric in his penultimate game in the Palma de Mallorca Interzonal, the winning of which qualified him for the Candidates matches. Moreover the Russians had even examined the ...♘h5 move in their preparations – with Vasyukov concluding that b2-b3 was best after the exchange of bishop for knight – but Spassky forgot all about it and spent half an hour contemplating whether or not to take the knight.

After a draw in their fourth encounter, Bobby wins again with the black pieces in the next game after Spassky’s passive play, coupled with uncharacteristic errors, against the Hubner variation of the Nimzo-Indian led to another resounding defeat.

With the score now 2½–2½ *Bobby Fischer against the World* then deals with a complaint from the Russians that an electronic device, even radiation, is

Bobby insisted the cameras be removed as they were disturbing his concentration...

being projected on to Spassky by some gadget hidden in the chair and/or the lighting fixture. Actually this incident did not occur after Game 5 but before Game 17, when Boris was on the brink of overall defeat, but let’s put that down to artistic license. In any event, Spassky does not feel his usual self and is making too many mistakes on the board, says Geller, and there is a suspicion of foul play. The items are duly taken apart and nothing is found, apart from two dead flies in the light fitting. However the rules demanded that everything be put back as it was previously, which included the two dead flies, so no post mortem was in fact carried out to see if they did die of radiation poisoning. Throughout, we get images of newspaper headlines, the one shown here being ‘Who killed the two dead flies’. Then again, a suspect object lodged inside Spassky’s chair was later revealed to be just a piece of wood filler!

So the whole scenario in Reykjavik was like walking a tightrope.

Getting back on schedule, we return to the wonderful sixth game where Bobby opened 1.c4, and commentator Susan Polgar remarks that Spassky could not have expected this, since the American was a staunch lifelong 1.e4 player, and so all the Russian preparation had now gone out of the window. However, chess buffs will know that the last tournament game Bobby played prior to the match, in the Palma de Mallorca Interzonal, was against Panno and it went: 1.c4, 1–0. Bobby’s quickest ever win – even he could not have believed the English



In any event Larry Evans continued: “Game Six was the best game of the match and in fact Spassky stood on stage applauding Fischer for the beauty of his play with the audience. It was an amazing moment. Never happened before. I’ve never seen a player lose and then applaud the opponent.” Actually it *had* happened before, when Spassky similarly applauded Paul Keres on stage after he had been defeated in a fine game in their 1965 Candidates match!

After this win Bobby not only held on to his lead but increased it to three points after Spassky blundered away the exchange directly in Game Eight and indirectly in Game Ten.

But Boris bounced back in Game Eleven after encircling Fischer’s queen in the American’s favorite Poisoned Pawn variation by means of the surprise retreating move 14.♘c3-b1! and capturing her thirteen moves later. So for only the second time in the match Fischer suffered defeat over the board – again by grabbing a ‘hot’ pawn!

Game Thirteen, which Garry Kasparov considered the best of the match, was a grand battle in which amazingly Fischer’s armada of pawns proved stronger than Spassky’s rook and bishop in a grueling 74-move encounter which reinstated his three point lead.

Spassky described the second half of the contest, marked by a long series of draws, in this way: “There was a period in the match when Bobby was under severe pressure. For six games in a row I was piling more and more pressure on him and at the very last moment he managed to escape.”

Bobby reacted by demanding that the front ten rows of seating in the theatre be removed as the spectators were disturbing him. The organizers compromised by taking out just three of the fifteen – but no more.

However in the movie it’s fast forward to the adjournment of Game 21, where we learn that ace photographer Harry Benson came across Spassky while out walking the following morning and was told “There is a new world champion, his name is Robert James Fischer.” So off went Harry, a good friend to Bobby, to be the first to congratulate him.

Marshall adds: “The official notice came by way of a phone call from world champion Spassky and he said ‘You may



Analyst Efim Geller and psychologist Nikolai Krogius were a major part of Spassky’s team and wanted him to return to Russia and remain world champion because of Bobby’s antics. But Boris said: “That would have suited the Sports Committee perfectly. But it didn’t suit me at all. That was the problem.”

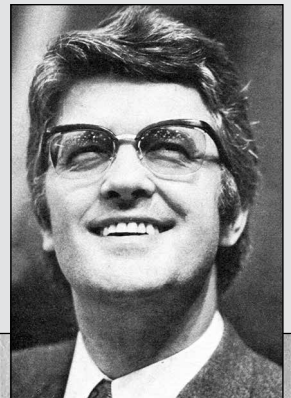
tell Mr Fischer that he is the new world champion.’ And we thanked him and then hung up the phone and began doing a typical Indian war dance round the room. Then a serious Catholic priest ran down the hall at top speed and knocked Bobby’s door down. And Bobby comes out looking somewhat angry and says ‘Bill, you come in here and analyze the adjourned position with me. Paul, did they put it in writing, if not, get it in writing.’ And he closed the door.” [Bette Marshall’s *Recollections: She Answered The Phone and Helped Change Chess History* can be read in ACM #19, pages 71–77. –Ed.]

Then we have more great footage of the prize giving ceremony, where Bobby still wants to analyze the end position of the last game, this time with Spassky himself. As *New York Times* correspondent Robert Byrne observed: “At the final banquet of the match, he comes over to Boris, pulls out his pocket chess set and Boris looks at him. ‘Oh

my God, hasn’t he had enough?’ No, he hadn’t had enough and he wanted to discuss one of the games they played. ‘I attack you here, what do you do now? It’s very easy now’.”

There is also a wonderful Harry Benson shot of Bobby spreadeagled on his hotel bed with the winner’s check and wreath lying on the table beside him.

When asked what he thought of his chances of retaining the title in the event of a return match, Fischer replied “Oh, I think I’ll beat him again much more easily. There’s no question about it in my



Chief arbiter and grandmaster Lothar Schmid kept the match on the road despite the most trying circumstances.





WEATHER:  
Fris. dry.  
Lightning-up time:  
8:17 p.m.  
Details—Back Page. 46/079

# Evening Standard

CLOSING PRICES

London: Friday September 1 1972 7RR 3p

## Spassky phones his resignation

# BOBBY IS CHAMP!



BOBBY FISCHER

Rarely has a chess contest made front page newspaper headlines!



mind.” And how he did he rate Spassky, compared with others he has played against? “The best, definitely. He gave me a real fight. All the other players I played, they crumbled.”

However, later, with a host of fans hounding him, all Bobby wanted to do was get away into the hills, away from the hustle bustle. Incidentally, Harry’s rear view shots of the new world champion’s solitary figure walking along the rather barren Icelandic landscape, anticipated Einar Einarsson’s similar photo of Bobby, taken during his final days of exile in Iceland over thirty years later and, indeed, published on the cover of Helgi Olafsson’s book *Bobby Fischer Comes Home*.

Back in the States, on a chat show, Bobby is asked how he feels now that the match with Spassky is all over and he says “I woke up after the thing was over and just felt different, like something had been taken out of me.” How right he was. Shelby Lyman commented: “After the win he didn’t really know what to do with his life. He reached an endpoint when he was 29.”

Three years later he was due to face a new challenger but this time his demands were not met in full so there was no Fischer-Karpov world title bout due to be hosted by the Philippines. The \$5 million prize fund was used instead for the famous Muhammad Ali vs. Joe Frazier ‘Thrilla in Manila’ fight. Incidentally, Bobby always complained that Ali had not only taken the title of ‘the greatest’ from him but also received more than double the prize money he would have been offered!

Then came the so-called ‘wilderness years’ of Fischer. One reviewer even suggested that the second half of the film should be called *The Rest of the World against Bobby Fischer* because Bobby was increasingly being taken over by his inner demons.

Indeed, there was a sense of foreboding in the BBC interviews conducted in the 1990s...

The Icelandic match organizer and President of the Icelandic Chess Federation, Gudmundur Thorarinnsson, reminisced on his parting words with Fischer: “He stood at the window at the Lofleider hotel, and at maybe rather a weak moment, as he was looking out of the window, he said ‘Gudmundur, the only thing I can do is play chess’ and he seemed rather sad. But there came a smile on his face and he said: ‘But I do that rather well’. When Fischer left he told me he would be a worthy champion. ‘I will play a lot. I will not be as the Russians. I will take part in all the tournaments. I will be defending the title.’ But I had the feeling that both he and Spassky were heavily damaged, psychologically, at the end. It was the pressure. I had the feeling they were friends. It didn’t affect their relationship. I was very glad.”

In turn Spassky reflected: “I felt that I lost the match before I even began, when

I said that my nerves were in a bad way. But Bobby Fischer had big problems of his own. I could sense this only too well. I left him to his own problems. But I was unable to sort out mine. I knew a time would come when I would have to pay for it all. I would be called to account. And that’s what happened. And ultimately I had to leave my country. I am Russian. It’s my land and nevertheless I had to abandon my own land. Incidentally, Bobby Fischer, an American, also had to abandon his country. And now we are both living as émigrés. So you see what strange things can sometimes happen in life. As the French say: ‘C’est la vie’.”

And Larry Evans predicted: “I had a feeling after he beat Spassky that something dreadful was going to happen. I didn’t know what it was. Either he’d never play again or he’d die young or whatever. He didn’t play another game for twenty years and disappeared.”

However that is another story... ■

After it was all over, President of the Icelandic Chess Federation and chief match organizer Gudmundur Thorarinnsson said: “I had the feeling that both he and Spassky were heavily damaged, psychologically, at the end. It was the pressure. I had the feeling they were friends. It didn’t affect their relationship. I was very glad.”







## An excerpt from “The Bobby Fischer Story”

By Jimmy Adams

Fischer–Taimanov was the Candidates draw  
Nobody predicted what was in store.  
Russian pre-match talk was pretty way out  
But Bobby wasn't aiming to fool about.  
His dreams were over – this time it was for real,  
Put Taimanov out – six games to nil.

Fischer or Larsen who was the best?  
Two great fighters in the world championship quest.  
Even though Bobby was going like a train  
Nobody thought he would do it again.  
But six straight games Larsen had to resign  
Against a computerized steamroller in its prime.

Now the Petrosian style was rather a bore,  
Too many times he played for a draw.  
But the first match game saw Fischer at his peak  
And win number twenty to the winning streak.  
Then Bobby caught a cold and to everyone's surprise  
Tigran got aggressive and equalized.  
But Fischer grew stronger day by day  
And three draws later began to pull away.  
A quartet of wins and how the fans cheered  
Victory of the man the Russians feared.

The world title fight was scheduled for Belgrade  
But Bobby wasn't satisfied with the wages they paid.  
Iceland took over but still that financial account  
Kept Fischer in New York just hanging about.  
However Jim Slater's generosity knew no bounds,  
He stepped up the kitty by fifty thousand pounds.  
Yet come weigh-in time Fischer didn't materialize,  
So Spassky walked out and made him apologize.  
Things went better second time around  
And at last the match got off the ground.

In the opening game Bobby tried too hard  
Staking a bishop on a losing card.

Just didn't want that easy draw  
But distractions didn't help that's for sure.  
Shapes and sizes, colors, heat and light,  
For Fischer every detail had to be right.  
Even the candy squad came to keep out the noise,  
No unwrapping of sweets by the girls and boys.

What Bobby wants Bobby gets,  
Conditions take precedence over TV sets.  
Too bad about that lawsuit from Chester Fox,  
Bobby can't concentrate while they film for the box.  
A protest default showed he was sincere,  
So those movie men just had to clear.

Now Bobby's opening repertoire had always been tight:  
A few lines as Black and P-K4 as White.  
But here he decided it was time for a change  
And pushed Spassky's preparation right out of range.  
Those queenside starts got Boris really confused,  
So did those brand new defenses he used.  
Fischer's come-back looked good after that 0–2  
beginning  
And after game six he was always winning.  
A three-point lead showed who was boss,  
Only a miracle could stop Spassky's title loss.

However Boris recovered after the halfway stage  
And began to shake off that hypnotic daze.  
But Bobby's spirit he just could not crack;  
Though he tried hard, defense stopped attack.  
Complaints of chemicals then came from Spassky's staff,  
But those chair bugging accusations were Fischer's  
biggest laugh.

The twenty-first game was Spassky's darkest hour  
When the Russians saw a shift in world chess power.  
Bobby had proved that he was the best  
And had opened the door to chess in the West...