



A RARE COLLECTION OF UNKNOWN AMERICAN CHESS GAMES

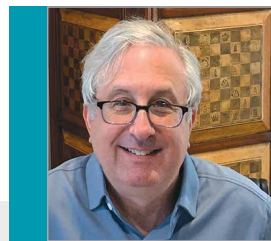
Oklahoma's First Rated Master

Ballard's best known game is his 1964 simul win against Bobby Fischer, when he outprepared the future champion in an Accelerated Dragon using analysis from the Russian chess magazine. However, most of D's other games remain unknown.

By Andy Ansel

In this article we will look at some games played by D LaPierre Ballard (1944-2022). D LaPierre Ballard was the strongest Oklahoma player in the years before the Fischer boom. Funnily enough, Ballard was under the strong influence of Russian chess literature at that time. He even wrote his score sheets using Russian algebraic notation. D (and that is his actual first name, not short for anything) was Oklahoma's first rated Master. Ballard's chess career started in 1962 while in college, and basically ended at Tulsa in 1974 when he withdrew after winning his first two games to achieve a published Master rating. He did come out of retirement and play two games in 2010.

Ballard's best known game is his win against Bobby Fischer during Fischer's 1964 simul tour, when he outprepared Bobby in an Accelerated Dragon using analysis from *Shakhmatny Bulletin*. However, most of D's other games remain unknown. *Mega* only has two other games of his, while *Chessgames.com* has an impressive 14 games spanning his entire career.



Andy Ansel can be considered a product of the Fischer boom, having learned to play chess in 1972. He was active in the Bay Area chess scene while in High School, after which he moved to New York, where he achieved a peak rating of around 2100. He has now retired from active chess play but spends his time collecting books and maintaining a database based on games drawn from his library. He currently resides in North Fork, Long Island, with his wife and two dogs. His grown-up daughters live in NYC and London.

I obtained a Xerox copy of his game scores from 1962 through 1967 which include many games against the Southwest's top players. D LaPierre's playing style was on the aggressive side. He played the King's Indian and Accelerated Dragon as Black. As White he opened with 1.e4. Interestingly, he kept score using Russian algebraic notation, which was quite unusual for an American in the 1960s.

On to the games which show how even unknown players can play some great games. Annotations are provided by Pete Tamburro.

In the first game, Ballard's opponent is Ken Smith. Smith, a chess legend from Texas, was also a poker champion and owned the largest U.S. chess retailer Chess Digest. In my files I have Ballard playing Smith five times with an even score.

FROM A RATHER UNIQUE GAMES DATABASE, *AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE* REVEALS EXCLUSIVELY SOME HIDDEN GEMS GATHERED TOGETHER OVER DECADES BY RENOWNED BIBLIOPHILE ANDY ANSEL.

B35

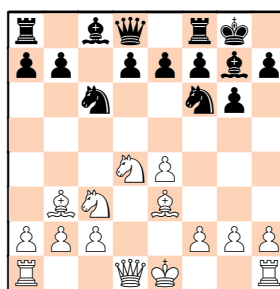
Ken Smith

D Ballard

Arkansas Open, Hot Springs 1966

This game is a bit of an anomaly as Ken Smith does not play the Smith-Morra Gambit. One of my all-time favorite quotes is from Larsen in the 1972 tournament book when Smith's opponent played 1...e6: "Stronger is 1...c5, which wins a pawn."

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘g6 The Accelerated Dragon: very popular as several methods have been developed to deal with the once "dreaded Maroczy Bind."
5.♗c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♗f6 7.♗c4 0-0 8.♗b3 The main alternative is exemplified by the game Fischer-Panno, Interzonal, Portoroz 1958, 8.f3 ♗b6 9.♗b3 ♗xe4 10.♗d5 ♗a5+ 11.c3 ♗c5 12.♗xc6 dxc6 13.♗xe7+ ♗h8 14.♗xc8 ♗axc8. A more detailed discussion can be found in *Openings for Amateurs - Next Steps*.



8...♗g4!? There are three playable alternatives: 8...a5, 8...b6 and 8...d5. Having said that, the game move falls under the aegis of "just because you can play a move doesn't mean you should."

9.♗xg4 ♗xd4 10.♗d1 ♗xb3 11.axb3 Ballard has his two bishops and does his level best to hold on to them.

11...b6 12.♗d4! Very logical. Get rid of the dark-squared bishop.

12...f6 Very ideological. He must really have liked his bishops. (See the box on next page -Ed.)

13.0-0!? Surprising for a player of Smith's aggressive nature. 13.♗d3 ♗b7 14.0-0-0 ♗c7 15.h4 seemed called for.

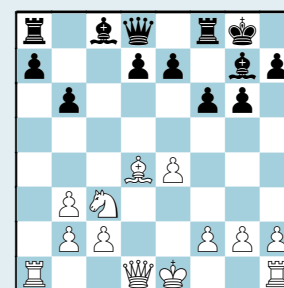


A Surprise For Bobby

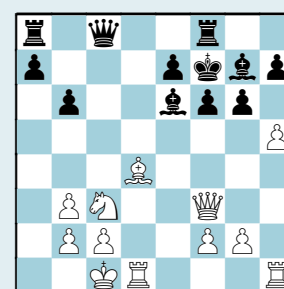
Robert Fischer

D Ballard

Wichita Simul 1964



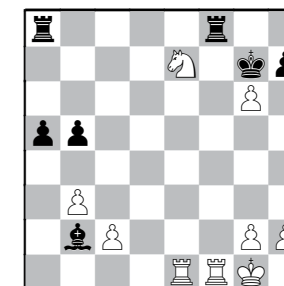
13.h4 ♗b7 14.h5 ♗f7 15.♗g4 d5 16.exd5 ♗xd5 17.0-0-0 ♗e6 18.♗g3 ♗b8 19.♗f3 ♗c8



20.♗e4? ♗g4 21.hxg6+ hxg6 22.♗d3 ♗xd1 23.♗xd1 ♗c6 24.♗h1 ♗ac8 25.c3 ♗h8 26.♗e1 ♗hd8 27.f4 ♗d5 28.♗b1 ♗xb3 29.f5 gxf5 30.♗g5+ ffg5 31.♗xf5+ ♗f6 32.♗xf6 ♗d1+ 33.♗xd1 ♗xd1+ 34.♗a2 ♗c5 35.♗e5+ ♗e8 36.b4 ♗e2+
White resigned

13...♗b7 14.f4 This thrust, however, is easily countered by the text move or by ...e7-e6.

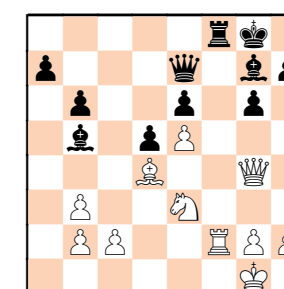
14...d5 15.e5 It gets complicated and exciting with the obvious 15.exd5 ♗xd5 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♗xd5+ ♗xd5 18.♗xd5 ♗xb2 19.♗xe7+ ♗f7 20.♗ae1 a5 21.f5 b5 22.fxg6+ ♗g7



A) White can't go two pawns up because of 23.gxh7 ♗xf1+ 24.♗xf1 (24.♗xf1 a4) 24...a4;

B) 23.♗f5+ ♗xg6 24.♗e6+ ♗f6 25.♗e7+ ♗g7 26.♗xf6 ♗xf6 27.♗d5 ♗d4+ I would love to have been a fly on the wall at this post-mortem.

15...fxe5 16.fxe5 ♗xf1+ 17.♗xf1 ♗c7 18.♗e2 ♗c6 Things have settled down a bit after the flurry of excitement. White has in mind a b4/b5 sequence to pin down the a7 pawn. Black might want to discourage that with 18...♗c8 19.b4 ♗c4 and yet keep his options open along the c8-h3 diagonal.
19.♗f1 e6 20.♗d1 ♗e7 21.♗g4 ♗b5 22.♗f2 ♗f8 23.♗e3



23...♗xf2! Sure. Once the rooks are exchanged, the draw is pretty much assured. **24.♗xf2 ♗f7+ 25.♗f3** "Let's go to dinner." **25...♗xf3+ 26.♗xf3 h5 27.g4 ♗h6** "Who's buying?" **Draw.**

The second game is against Houston's Robert Brieger, a noted problemist and author of several endgame books. He was a Master player and a fixture on the Southwest chess tour. His playing style was very original. He even wrote a little pamphlet on the 2...♗f5 line in the Queen's



Gambit Declined. His endgame studies often featured reciprocal *zugzwang* and minor piece promotion.

B22

Robert Brieger

D Ballard

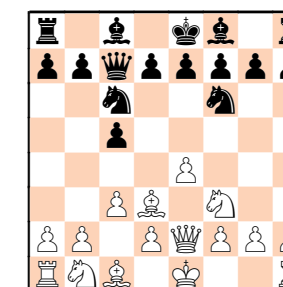
Texas Open, Denton 1966

Robert Brieger's approach in this game is what one might expect from an endgame composer with a fertile and experimental mind. His search for originality apparently was not limited to that part of our noble game.

1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♗f6 If you're playing for a win as Black, this is the best move against the Alapin Sicilian.

3.♗d3!? You would be amazed at who has tried this ♗d3 before d4 move with c3 to follow. Go to Chessbase and search through the startling number of well-known players who have used this idea against ...e6, ...♗c6 and ...d6 Sicilians as well. Years ago IM Danny Kopec (1954-2016) used this idea against the ...d6 Sicilian: 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.♗d3 ♗c6 4.c3. **3...♗c6 4.♗f3 ♗c7** Both 4...e5 and 4...d5 are very good here as well.

5.♗e2

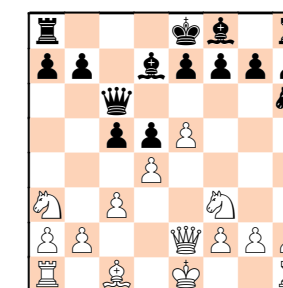


5...d5! 6.e5 ♗g4 6...♗h5 with the threat of ...♗f4 doesn't appeal to him.

7.♗b5 Adjusting to circumstances - the threat to the pawn.

7...♗d7 8.♗xc6 ♗xc6 9.♗a3 So the bishop will be protected after d4.

9...♗h6 10.d4

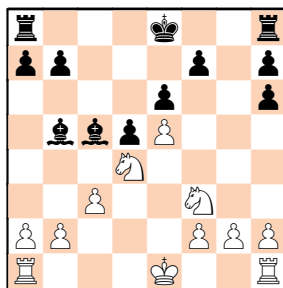


10...e6? Because the queen would still be protecting the knight on h6, better would be 10...c4.

11. **g6** **g6** Again with the two bishops. He doesn't mind the doubled pawns and is ready to use the g-file to attack if White castles kingside.

12. **dx5** It would have been fun to see each one get what they want after 12.0-0 0-0-0 13. **xc2** **g8**.

12... **xc5** 13. **xc2** **b5** 14. **xb5** **xb5** 15. **cd4** Two bishops vs. two knights. Not so easy because of the currently blocked position.



15... **cd3!** A better diagonal. There is no need to prevent castling because White won't be contemplating that anyhow.

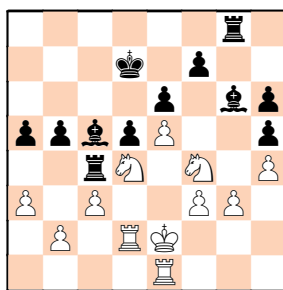
16. **cd2** **e4** 17. **de1** **cd7** 18. **f3** **g6** 19. **cd3** **e7** The knights, however, are centralized and holding their own.

20. **h4** **h5** 21. **cf4** White is not threatening to take the bishop. He's threatening to go for the h5 pawn with **de2** and **dg3**. Ballard takes a good look and prepares a counterattack should that be tried.

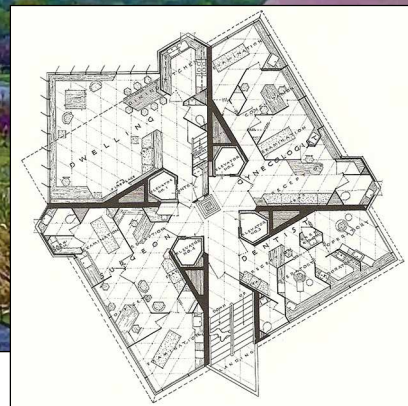
21... **hg8** 22. **ce3** **h6** 23. **cf2** **a6** 24. **g3** Brieger realizes that there will be sufficient counterplay for Black after 24. **de2** **b5** 25. **dg3** **cc5+** 26. **cf1** **b4** 27. **dgxh5** **hxh5** 28. **dxh5** **ggb8** 29. **cf6+** **ce7** 30. **ce2** **bxc3** 31. **bxc3** **bb2+**.

24... **ac8** 25. **he1** **cc4** One nice thing about Ballard's previous plan is that it becomes a viable strategy here with the ...**b5-b4** idea.

26. **ad1** **b5** 27. **a3** **cc5** 28. **dd2** **a5** Ballard's minority attack is in full swing. 29. **ce2**



AN ICONIC LANDMARK AND CULTURAL GEM OF OKLAHOMA
PRICE TOWER IN BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA IS CELEBRATED FOR ITS DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT. AS WRIGHT'S ONLY REALIZED SKYSCRAPER, IT STANDS AS A TESTAMENT TO HIS UNIQUE VISION AND CREATIVITY. WITH ITS BLEND OF ORGANIC AND GEOMETRIC ELEMENTS, THE TOWER HAS BECOME AN ICONIC SYMBOL OF ARCHITECTURAL INNOVATION.



29... **ca7??** He should have continued with the plan 29...**b4!** 30. **axb4** **axb4** 31. **cc1** **bb8**. Instead, he makes a fatal blunder.

30. **dg2??** And Brieger misses it! 30. **dxb5** **bb8** 31. **cf2** **a4** 32. **dd4±**.

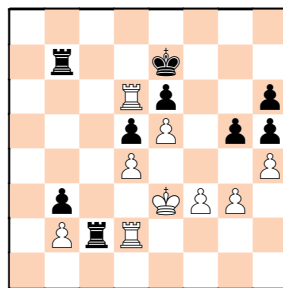
30... **bb8** The minority attack still works: 30...**b4**.

31. **ca1** **bb7** 32. **cf4** **b4** How many times have we seen in our own games a move we played one or two moves after we should have?

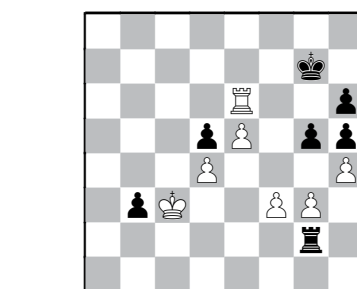
33. **axb4** **axb4** 34. **dxg6** **fxg6** 35. **ca6** **xd4** 36. **cxd4** **b3** After 36...**ce7** there's not much for either side to do. However, Ballard goes for an edgy move.

37. **cf2** **cc2** 38. **ce3** **bbc7** 39. **dd3** **bb7** 39...**ccb2** 40. **bb6=**.

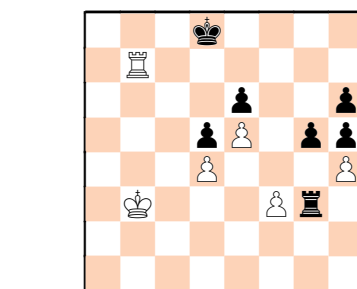
40. **dd6+** **ce7** 41. **dd2** **g5**



42. **ca6** **xd2** 43. **cd2** **cc7** 44. **bb6** **cc2+** 45. **cd3** **xb2** 46. **bb7+** **cf8** 47. **bb8+** **cg7** 48. **bb7+** **cf8** Lots of tense play leading to equality: 48...**cg6** 49. **ce7** **g6** 50. **ce6+** **cg7** 51. **cc3**



- A) 51... **cg3** 52. **xb3** **g4**.
- B) 51...**b2** 52. **bb6** **cg3** 53. **xb2** **xf3+** 54. **cb4** **ff4** 55. **cc5** **hxh4** 56. **cdx5** **g4** 57. **e6** **g3** 58. **ce5** **hh2** 59. **bb1** **h4=** 49. **bb8+** **ce7** 50. **bb7+** **cd8** 51. **cc3** **gg2** 52. **xb3** **cg3**



53. **cb4** The difficult position of the black king and the white king's access to **d6** is a key in all this. 53. **hxg5** **hxg5** (53...**xf3+** 54. **cb4** **hxg5** 55. **cc5**) 54. **cb4** **h4** 55. **cc5**

h3 56. **cd6** **cc8** 57. **cc7+** **cb8** 58. **ff7**. 53...**xf3** 54. **bb7** **gxh4** 55. **bb6** **ce7** 56. **bb5** **h3** 57. **bb7+** **cf8** 58. **cc5** **ca3** 59. **cd6** **ca6+** 60. **cc5** **ca3** This is drawn. Brieger must have stepped over the time limit and **Black won**.

A tough fight. By the way, this was by no means an easy tournament. Roy Hoppe of California won with 6 wins and a draw. Ballard and Ken Smith finished on a shared 2nd a point behind, while a half point behind them were Jude Acers, Eric Bone and Robert Brieger.

Despite extensive research, I could not find out anything about his last opponent Robert McCready. There are no games of his in any commercial database, but I did find an Expert rating published in *Chess Life*...

COO

D Ballard

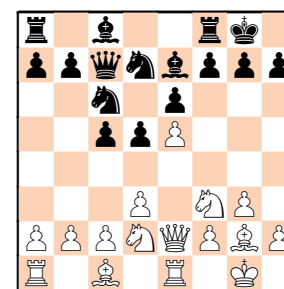
Robert McCready

Oklahoma Chess Festival, Norman 1965

1. **e4** **e6** 2. **d3** **d5** 3. **cd2** **c5** 4. **dgf3** **dc6** 5. **g3** The King's Indian Attack is a very good system to familiarize yourself with. It has many features and subtleties that lead to complex positions where you will be playing your opponent instead of some GM-generated line from a specialty opening book.

In recommending the **cxd4** Sicilian to my students, I also recommend the KIA should Black not cooperate with 2...**d6** and play 2...**e6**. One of the nice features is that you have a move in hand while playing the King's Indian AND how many players of the White pieces play an inchworm move like **e3** against it?

5...**cf6** 6. **gg2** **ce7** 7. 0-0 0-0 8. **ce1** This line is still played today. The initial skirmish will be in the center of the battlefield as White takes over the hill on **e5** and Black has to make a choice on how to contest an enemy incursion into his dark squares. 8...**cc7** 9. **e5** **cd7** 10. **cc2**



10...**b5** In the spirit of the Sicilian, Black initiates a counter demonstration on the

queenside. What's fascinating is that all sorts of GMs have been in this exact position. Onischuk has been on both sides! Benko, Bronstein and Korchnoi in the distant past played the White side while Nepo, Sevan, Svidler and Firouzja have chosen it in recent years. The Black side has been played by Dominguez Perez and Kramnik. Whichever side you pick, you're in good company.

11. **cf1** Starting a knight path from **f1** to **h2** maybe even **g3-g4** and further in some future kingside attack.

11...**a5** 12. **h4** Back in the day, I remember seeing this move for the first time. Are you allowed to do that?? Yes you are! The center is for the moment stable. The wing attacks begin and room is made for the knight. Not to be outdone, the Texas expert chooses a move that gets an "!" from *Chessbase*. These guys didn't even have *Informant* yet – unless they had *Informator* "Zero", which I have on my shelves.

12... **ca6!** The indirect attack on the queen means White will have to worry about more than the kingside attack.

13. **h5** **ac8** Perhaps not familiar with Tarrasch's dictum that when a rook pawn gets to your fourth rank against your castled position, you need to nudge the rook pawn forward: 13...**h6**.

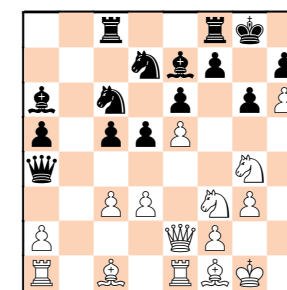
14. **c3** Thus, following Tarrasch, White should have pushed the pawn, i.e. 14. **h6** **g6** 15. **ff4** **cd4** 16. **cdx4** **cx4** 17. **ac1** **b4** 18. **ch2** **a4** 19. **cdx5±**.

14...**b4?** Last chance for ...**h7-h6**.

15. **h6** **g6** 16. **ch2** That gaping hole on **f6** may very well have a white knight land on it someday...

16...**bb6** 17. **dg4** **bb5** Black had at least to try 17...**a4**.

18. **cf1** **bxc3** 19. **bxc3** **ca4**



20. **ch3!** The Black forces usually in charge of defense of **e6** are now flailing around the queenside. That bishop is now dangerous for potential sacrificial reasons.

20...**bb8** 21. **ch5?** Much better was trying to get rid of a key dark-square defender. You have to get all your players off the bench and into the game. We often forget that it helps

to complete development before move 22. Therefore 21. **gg5!**.

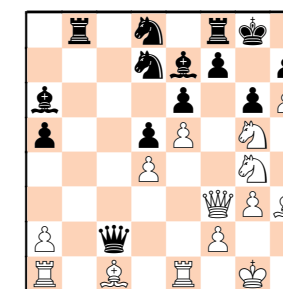
21...**cd8?** Black had one more chance to make it a real fight: 21...**d4!** 22. **we4** **c4** 23. **gg2** **bb7** 24. **ff4** **cx4** 25. **dd2** and we now have hand-to-hand combat.

22. **ff3?** There are times when you have to take a pause in your attack and shore up the home front. That's what was needed here: 22. **cf3!** **bb5** 23. **dd1** **dc6** 24. **c4** **dx4** 25. **dx4** **bb7** 26. **we4±**.

22...**cc2!** Still in there fighting!

23. **d4** Objectively better was 23. **cf6+** **exf6** 24. **exf6** **cc3** 25. **ff4** **bb7** 26. **dd6** **cx4** 27. **ee3** **dd2**.

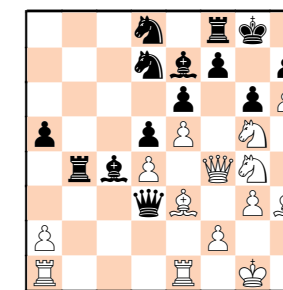
23...**cx4** 24. **cx4**



24...**cd3??** It's still a fight after 24...**cd6** 25. **we3** (Not 25. **ee3** **cdx4** 26. **cdx4** **gg5**) 25...**ca4** 26. **ch3** **cb4**.

25. **ff4!** No queen exchange, thank you. 25...**bb4** Now, with the queen protecting the knight on **g5**, 25...**dc6** doesn't work because of 26. **ee3**.

26. **ee3** **cc4** And now the final assault. Ballard is in his element.



27. **cf6+!** **exf6** 28. **exf6** **bb2** 29. **cd6** Everything works.

29...**dx6** 30. **we7** A queen forking knights for a change.

30...**ch5** 31. **ch7!** **Black resigned** due to major material loss ahead.

The King's Indian Attack is not for the faint hearted. In going through these three games, Ballard shines through as a dynamic player perfect for Swiss System tournaments. He loves his bishops and handles the rest of his team very well. ■