

Contents

Introduction	7
Chapter 1 Fischer's Technique.....	9
Chapter 2 Bishop Dominates Knight	47
Chapter 3 Knight Dominates Bishop	75
Chapter 4 Concrete Endgames.....	92
Chapter 5 Rooks and Opposite-Coloured Bishops Endgames..	108
Index of names	121
Explanation of symbols.....	122
Resources used for this book.....	123

Introduction

Robert James Fischer has always been my chess idol – not just because of his results, but because of the way he played the game.

Ever since studying his games as a child, I was impressed by the directness and the forcing nature of his moves. Every decision seemed to be exact, posing problems with relentless pressure. It was the kind of chess that demanded immediate answers.

What stood out even more was his endgame play. Unlike the typical Soviet approach of ‘no rush’ and waiting for the perfect moment, Fischer’s style was the opposite: clear, purposeful, and direct. His endgames looked like a rare blend – Capablanca’s clarity combined with Alekhine’s energy. At times, it didn’t even feel like the endgame; the intensity, the calculation, the energy – it was as if it was the middlegame all along.

In this book, I present some of Fischer’s most famous endgames, organized into five chapters: Fischer’s Technique, Bishop Dominates Knight, Knight Dominates Bishop, Concrete Endgames, and Rooks and Opposite-Coloured Bishops Endgames. I have tried to explain every move he played – not just what he did, but why he did it. Wherever possible, I have included quotes from his book *My 60 Memorable Games*, which offer rare insight into his mindset and approach.

I organized the book into these chapters as they best illustrate the distinctive traits of his endgame style. Interestingly, his rook endgame play wasn’t notably superior to that of his contemporaries, often marked by inaccuracies. For instance, against Gligoric in the 1959 Candidates, he made a significant blunder by miscalculating a pawn endgame transposition and only saved the draw after Gligoric blundered in return. Additionally, his most renowned rook endgame – a missed victory against World Champion Botvinnik at the 1962 Varna Olympiad – is another example.

This book is designed for players of all levels. I explain both fundamental and advanced concepts, so no matter where you are on your chess journey, you should be able to follow the analysis. Throughout the games, I ask questions that serve as exercises – an invitation to step into Fischer’s shoes. Solving them will help you internalize his thinking and sharpen your own decision-making.

My hope is that, by the end of this book, you will approach endgames with greater confidence. Ideally, you will learn to 'turn the screws' like Bobby – methodically and precisely – until your opponents crack.

Join me on this journey, and discover the beauty and brilliance of Bobby Fischer's endgames.

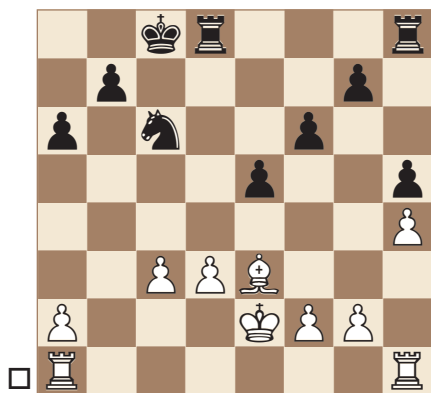
Alex Colovic

Skopje, September 2025

Game 8

Bobby Fischer Mikhail Tal

Candidates Tournament, Curaçao 1962



The opening was a success for Tal, who has obtained a pleasant endgame. White's bishop is good, but Black has the better pawn structure and his knight is stable.

20. ♖ad1

Fischer shows ambition. By simply sitting still and not moving the pawns, he could have drawn the game without any adventures, but Fischer wants to push the d-pawn forward, creating a passed pawn but allowing it to be blockaded on the d5-square. This blockade will also make his bishop passive.

20... ♘e7 21. d4

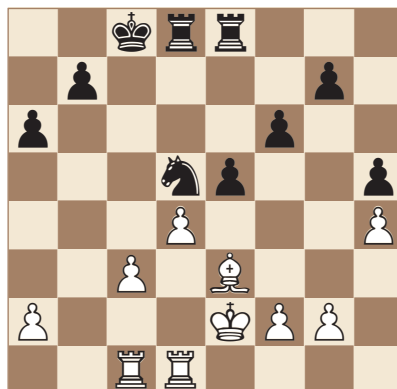
Continuing with the plan.

21... ♘d5

Tal establishes the blockading knight.

21...exd4 was a possible alternative. 22. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 23. ♘xd4 (23.cxd4 ♘d5 is a dream for Black, though the position is objectively equal after 24. ♘d3 ♘d7 25.a4 and White should be able to create enough counterplay not to lose; obviously, this is not something Fischer would have wanted to play) 23...♖d8 is equal; the bishop is stable in the centre and defends the weak pawn on c3.

22. ♖c1 ♖he8 23. ♖hd1



Both sides are fully mobilized, and now it is Tal's turn to decide how to proceed.

23...f5?!

An ambitious move that marks a turning point. Until now, it was Black applying slight pressure, but weakening the kingside dark squares gives White something concrete to latch onto. While the position remains equal, the initiative subtly passes to White – a shift in momentum

that Fischer was exceptionally attuned to.

23...exd4 would have transposed to the type of positions from the note to Black's 21st move.

24.♖xd4 (or 24.cxd4+ ♔d7 25.♖c5 ♔e6 with a rock-solid blockade on d5) 24...♕xe3 25.fxe3 ♖e5 and Black has the better side of a drawn (double) rook endgame.

EXERCISE: How can White take advantage of Black's last move?

ANSWER: 24.♕g5!

Fischer immediately activates the bishop.

24...♖d7

Both players had to calculate 24...exd4+ 25.♕f3 ♕xc3 (25...♖d7 26.♖xd4 is similar to the game) 26.♕xd8 ♖xd8 27.♕f4 and while the position is objectively equal after 27...g6, it looks somewhat dangerous for Black with the white king so active after 28.♕e5 ♖d5+ 29.♕e6.

25.dxe5 ♖xe5+ 26.♕f3

White has concrete prospects on the kingside – the knight on d5 can be chased away with c4 when the king can move to f4 and later to g5, attacking Black's pawns.

26...♖e4

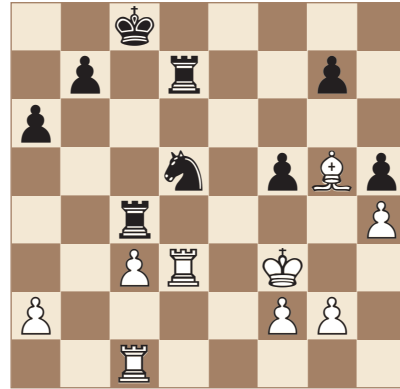
Tal takes control of the fourth rank, preventing the mentioned king activation via the f4-square.

27.♖d3

Fischer wants to double rooks on the d-file.

27.c4 ♕c7, with ...♕e6 to come, helps relocate the knight to a safer spot.

27...♖c4



Tal is trying to pin White down to the defence of the pawn on c3, thus preventing the doubling of the rooks.

EXERCISE: How did Fischer pinpoint the drawback of Tal's idea?

ANSWER: 28.♖cd1!

Fischer understands the position more deeply! He sacrifices a pawn to activate his king, correctly judging that Black's extra pawn on the queenside is too far removed to have an impact. Now a forcing sequence follows:

28...♖xc3 29.♖xc3+ ♕xc3 30.♖c1 ♖c7

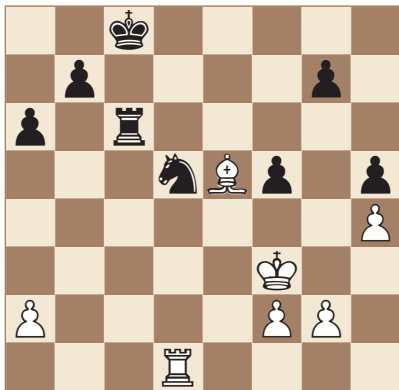
30...♖d3+?! 31.♕f4 only helps White, though the position remains very sharp after 31...♕d7 32.♕xf5 ♕xa2 33.♖e1 when White

wants to play ♔f5-g6xg7 and run with the f-pawn. Objectively this should end in a draw, but it's quite hair-raising.

31. ♖f4 ♜c6 32. ♖e5 ♘d5

After 32... ♘xa2? 33. ♜xc6+ bxc6 34. ♖f4! Black is temporarily two pawns up, but he is lost as his kingside pawns are falling and the disconnected passed pawns on the queenside are easily controlled by the long-ranging bishop.

33. ♜d1



The end of the forcing sequence. Now Black needs to decide what to do with the attacked knight. The difference between a bishop and a knight in an open position is clearly seen here – the knight's lack of stable squares makes it the more vulnerable piece.

33... ♘f6

The natural retreat, guarding the pawn on g7, but this definitely puts Black on the defensive. This is the second critical point

in the game. With either of the alternatives Black could have refused to become the defending side:

A) 33... ♔d7!? was a curious tactical defence. Black simply wants to centralize the king with 34... ♖e6 and provide stability for the knight on d5: 34. ♜xd5+ (34. ♖xg7 ♖e6 is quite alright for Black, who has excellent light-square control) 34... ♖e6 35. ♜a5 b6 36. ♜xa6 ♖xe5 with a drawn rook endgame;

B) 33... ♘c3 was the sharpest try, inviting a repetition or double-edged play: 34. ♜d3 (34. ♜a1?! g6 35. ♖f4 b5 looks good for Black, who has the kingside safely defended and can advance with his extra pawn; 34. ♜c1 would be the safe choice and a repetition) 34... ♘xa2 35. ♖xg7 ♘b4 36. ♜d2 ♜g6 37. ♖a1 b5 38. g3 with unclear play; White isn't worse, but Black's two connected passed pawns look scary.

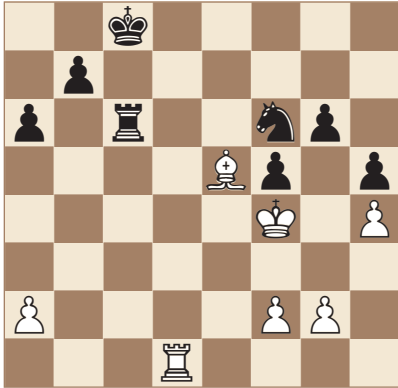
34. ♖f4

Now White simply moves forward with the plan while Black needs to defend.

34... g6

34... ♜c2 was more active; for example, 35. ♜f1 (or 35. ♖d4 ♜xa2 36. ♖xf5 b5 37. ♖g6 b4 with extremely double-edged play which is objectively equal but Black should be the more careful side) 35... ♘g4 36. ♖xg7 ♘h2 (or 36... ♘xf2 37. ♖xf5 ♘g4

38.♔g5 ♖xg2 39.♕xh5 ♜e3 which should be drawn) 37.♖g1 ♗xf2+ 38.♔g5 ♖xa2 39.♕xh5 f4 with the idea of ...f3, again with a likely draw.



EXERCISE: Which move did Fischer play to limit the mobility of his opponent's forces and diminish the possible effect of counterplay?

ANSWER: 35.f3!

Domination and prophylaxis – the pawn controls the e4- and g4-squares, thus limiting the knight's mobility, while at the same time one pawn is removed from the second rank, avoiding attacks with ...♖c2.

35...♜d7 36.♗d6

Blocking the sixth rank and threatening ♕f4-g5xg6.

36...♖c2?

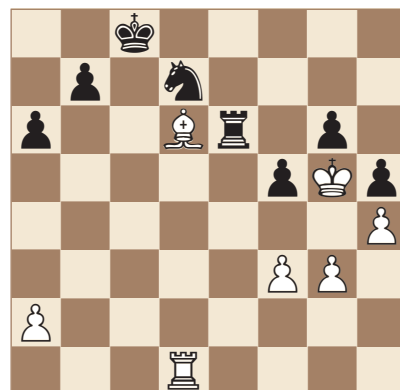
Tal plans the defensive manoeuvre ...♖c2-e2-e6, to defend his pawn on g6, but this fails to achieve the aim of protecting the kingside.

36...b5 37.♔g5 ♜b6 is a small tactic that defends the pawn on g6 in view of the pin on the sixth rank and the threat of ...♜c4 or ...♜d7. If White wants to capture the pawn, he should exchange rooks by 38.♗f4 (with the idea of ♖d6; 38.♔xg6? ♜d7 loses the bishop on d6; after 38.♗e5 with the same idea of ♖d6, but also ♗f6, 38...♖e6! defends as 39.♗f6 b4 40.♔xg6? ♜d7 drops the bishop) 38...♜c4, stopping ♖d6, when White's play on the kingside comes to a standstill. He should still be able to draw after 39.♖d5 b4 40.♔h6 a5 41.♖b5 when the activity of his pieces prevents Black from making something out of his passed pawn on the queenside.

37.g3 ♖e2

37...♖xa2 38.♔g5 would have led to the complete annihilation of the black kingside.

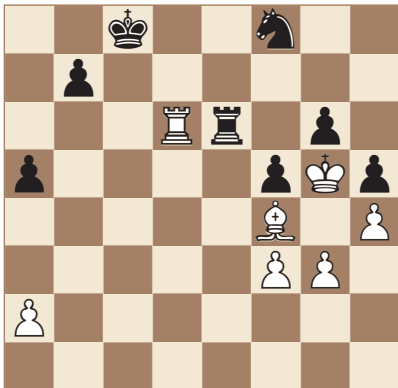
38.♔g5 ♖e6



EXERCISE: How does White refute Black's defensive set-up?

ANSWER: 39.♔f4!

This is the key idea for White – he will exchange rooks with ♖d6, after which Black's kingside will be defenceless. In the note to Black's 36th move we saw how important it was for Black to stop this idea (the move 38...♘c4), but here that is not possible. It's worth noting that Fischer's choice is more logical than the alternative 39.♖h6, which should also win; he keeps the king on g5 and goes directly after the rook on e6, the key piece in Black's defensive set-up. **39...♙f8 40.♖d6 a5**



EXERCISE: Does the exchange on e6 and the capture on g6 lead to a win?

ANSWER: 41.♖h6!

Moving away from a possible check after ...♘xe6 and also threatening 42.♖g7. The pawn endgame after 41.♖xe6? ♘xe6+ 42.♖xg6 ♘xf4+ 43.gxf4 b5 is drawn.

41...♖e2

After 41...b5 42.♖g7 ♖xd6 43.♖xd6 ♘e6+ 44.♖xg6 all the kingside pawns will be lost.

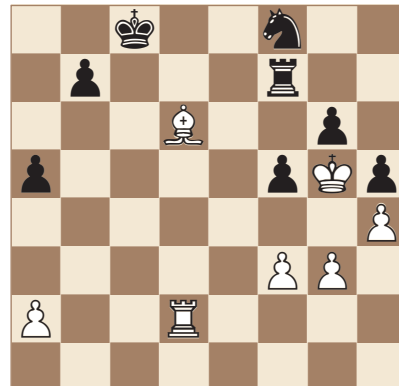
42.♖d2

Continuing to seek the exchange of rooks.

42...♖e7

42...♖e6 43.♖g7 squeezes Black from the kingside. The persistent avoidance to exchange rooks leads to mate after 43...♘d7 44.♖c2+ ♖d8 45.♖g5+ ♖e8 46.♖c8#.

43.♖d6 ♖h7+ 44.♖g5 ♖f7



45.♖b2

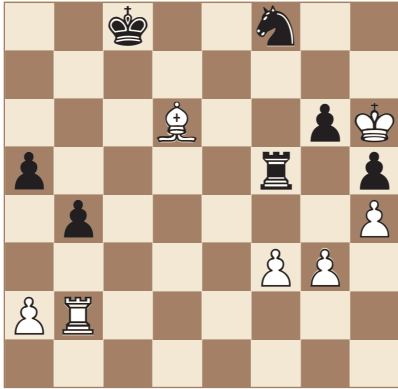
Black is so passive that White can continue to play for domination. White threatens 46.♖b5 to round up the a-pawn. The rook endgame after 45.♖xf8 ♖xf8 46.♖xg6 is winning for White – the difference in king activity is decisive. But Fischer, characteristically, doesn't want to part with his bishop.

45...f4

Desperately seeking counterplay.

46. ♖xf4 ♜f5+ 47. ♗h6 b5 48. ♙d6 b4

48...♜xf3 49. ♜xb5 and everything hangs: the pawn on a5, but also, after ♙xf8, the pawns on g6 and h5.



49.g4!

Elevation – Fischer pushes upwards.

Or 49. ♗g7 ♘e6+ 50. ♗xg6 ♜xf3 51. ♜d2, preventing 51...♜d3 and intending 52. ♗xh5 next, with an easily winning position.

49...♜xf3 50.g5

Bringing the g-pawn closer to promotion after White captures the pawn on g6.

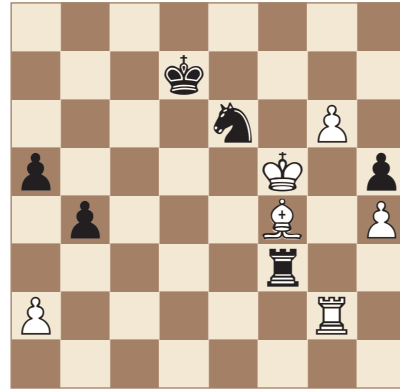
50...♘e6

Otherwise White plays 51. ♙xf8 followed by 52. ♗xg6.

51. ♗xg6 ♜d3 52. ♙e5 ♜e3 53. ♗f5 ♘f8 54. ♜g2

Preparing g6, which wasn't immediately possible in view of ...♘xg6 and the bishop on e5 hangs.

54...♜f3+ 55. ♙f4 ♘d7 56.g6 ♘e6
White wins material now:



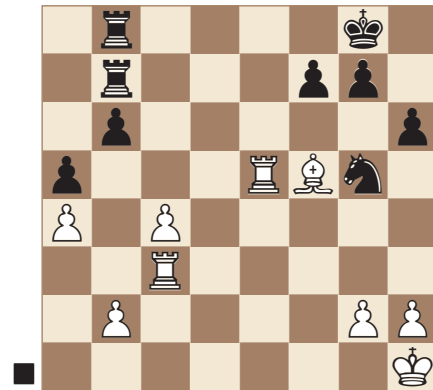
57.g7 ♜xf4+ 58. ♗e5 ♜f8 59.gxf8 ♘xf8 60. ♗d5 a4 61. ♜g7+ ♗e8 62. ♗d6 b3 63.a3 1-0

Black can barely move and the b-pawn is easily controlled after ♜b7.

Game 9

Bobby Fischer
Mark Taimanov

Interzonal, Palma de Mallorca 1970



In an open position, a bishop is superior to a knight, and here the knight does indeed lack

CHAPTER 4

Concrete Endgames

I have repeatedly mentioned that Fischer's style was very concrete. The examples that follow show Fischer play the endgame in middlegame style – attacks, counterattacks and dynamism all over the board. It seems as if he managed to outpour the energy from his mind to his pieces. A notable game is the one with Polugaevsky – the only game in the whole book that Fischer didn't win, but only because his opponent turned out to be equally well-versed at that type of play.

Game 17

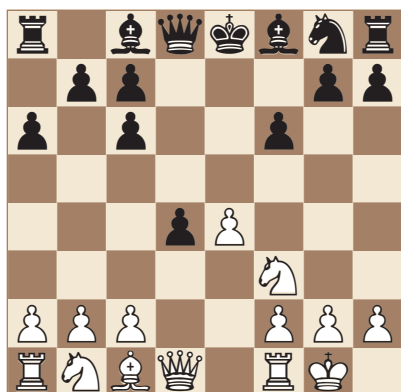
Bobby Fischer
Lajos Portisch

Havana Olympiad 1966

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6
4.♙xc6

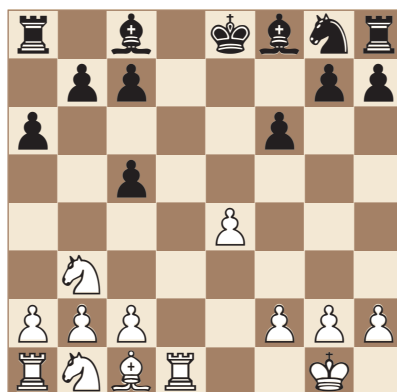
Fischer introduced the Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez at the Havana Olympiad, where he played three games with it. He won them all. This was the first of those three victories.

4...dxc6 5.0-0 f6 6.d4 exd4



The game against Rubinetti in Buenos Aires in 1970, covered in the chapter on Fischer's technique, saw Black choose the other principal line 6...♙g4.

7.♘xd4 c5 8.♘b3 ♔xd1 9.♙xd1



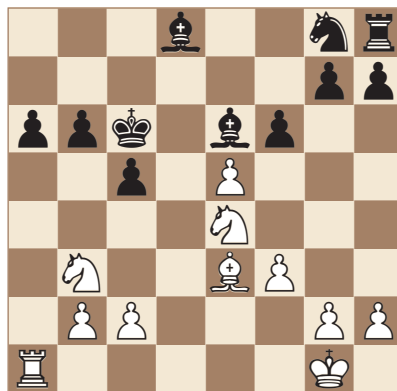
9...♙d6?!

Today we know that this move is not very good, but in the 1960s it was played quite a bit. The bishop may look safe on d6, but it can be exposed after Fischer's strong reply. In their second match in 1992, Spassky went for

one of the main moves, 9...♗g4, but lost in a miniature because of a blunder.

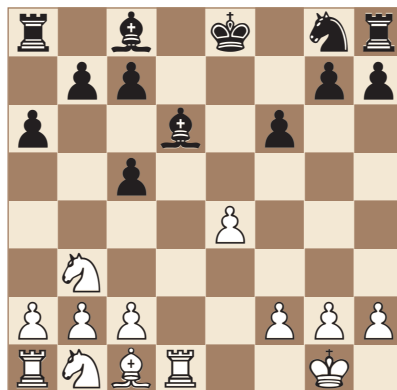
With 9...♗g4 Black provokes 10.f3 before dropping the bishop back to e6 (it's also possible to play 9...♗e6 immediately or 9...♗d7 to prepare long castling): 10.f3 ♗e6 11.♟c3 ♗d6 (now the manoeuvre ♟b3-a5-c4 is not possible since the bishop on e6 controls the c4-square) 12.♗e3 b6 13.a4 (White wants to undermine the queenside structure b6/c5 by pushing the pawn to a5) 13...0-0-0 (it's possible to stop White's advance with 13...a5, but that weakens the light squares. Still, after 14.♟b5 0-0-0 15.♟xd6+ cxd6 Black should be fine) 14.a5 ♖b7 (14...♗xb3 15.cxb3 b5 is a good alternative – Black gives up the pair of bishops but doubles White's b-pawns and advances his queenside majority) 15.e5! (a pretty tactical idea; White sacrifices a pawn in order to liberate the e4-square for the knight) 15...♗e7 (the only move; 15...fxe5? 16.axb6 cxb6 17.♟e4 ♗e7 18.♟xd8 ♗xd8 19.♟bxc5+! is the winning line that shows White's attacking potential) 16.♟xd8 ♗xd8 17.♟e4 (17.♗xc5!? ♟h6! is tenable for Black) 17...♗c6?? (Spassky blunders a tactic. 17...♗xb3 was essential: after 18.cxb3, 18...♟e7, finishing development, or 18...♗e7 or 18...♗c6 are all possible: 19.exf6 gxf6 and now 20.♟xf6? is not

possible in view of the double attack 20...♟f5 21.♟d5 c6 22.g4 cxd5 23.gxf5 ♖e8 with a much better endgame for Black) 18.axb6 cxb6



analysis diagram

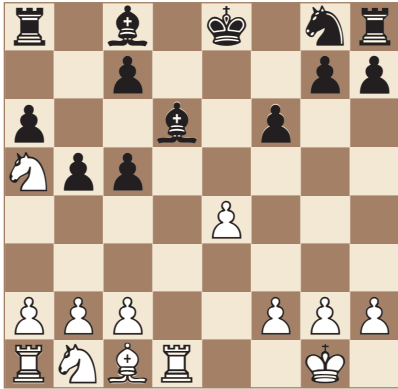
19.♟bxc5! (Fischer doesn't miss the winning idea) 19...♗c8 (19...bxc5 20.♟xa6+ ♗d5 21.♟d6+ ♗xe5 22.♟xd8 is crushing) 20.♟xa6 fxe5 21.♟b4+. Black's position falls apart and he resigned in the 9th game of the match Fischer-Spassky, Sveti Stefan/Belgrade 1992.



10. ♖a5!

While known at the time, this move is typical of Fischer's very concrete approach not only to endgames, but to chess in general. White threatens 11. ♖c4.

10...b5



11.c4

This was supposed to be an improvement on an older game by Spassky, but in fact, it isn't! 11.a4 is preferred by today's engines; after 11... ♖e7, played in the game Perez Perez-Spassky in Havana 1962, an improvement is 12. ♖a3 ♜b8 13. axb5 axb5 14. c4! with an unpleasant initiative.

11... ♖e7 12. ♖e3

Fischer develops the queenside by targeting the c5-pawn that he fixed with his previous move.

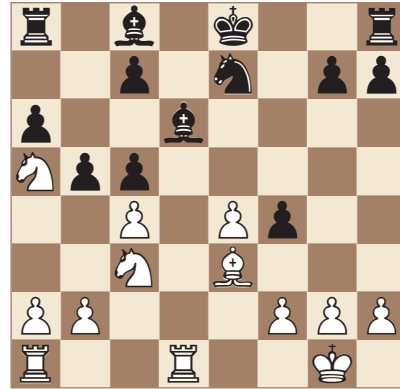
12...f5

Objectively not bad, but Portisch is playing with fire. It was safer to castle first.

13. ♖c3 f4?!

Entering unnecessary complications. 13...0-0 was

better. Now after 14.e5 ♖xe5 15. ♖xc5 ♜e8 Black's king is safe and Black is better coordinated; for example, 16. ♖xe7 ♖xc3! 17.bxc3 ♜xe7 18. ♜d8+ ♗f7 with ...♜d7 or ...♜e8 next to eject the rook on d8.



14.e5!?

Typical of Fischer, reacting to an attack with a counterattack. The game enters a very concrete and calculational phase, more typical of sharp middlegames than endgames.

14. ♖d2! was stronger. Black is over-extended and White puts pressure on the b5-pawn. The idea to attack the pawn on f4 with ♖e2 is also unpleasant. 14...c6 15. ♖e2 0-0 16.f3 is extremely good for White. Black has a loose bishop on d6 that is defending the weak pawn on c5, which can be further attacked by ♜ac1 and cxb5 (and possibly even ♖d2-e1-f2). The knight on a5 is keeping the knight on e7 in place to defend the pawn on

c6. However, it's worth pointing out that this position is much more static than the one Fischer chose in the game – his stylistic preference for dynamism clearly affected his choice.

14...♙xe5 15.♙xc5 ♙xc3

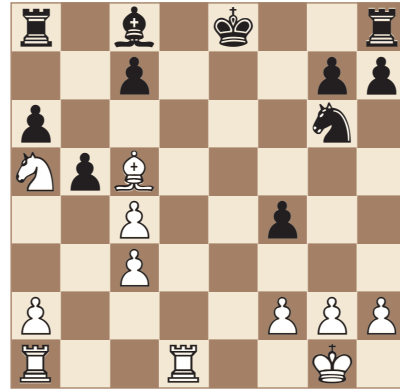
Eliminating the knight that could have come to d5 after ♙xe7.

16.bxc3 ♘g6?!

The knight defends the pawn on f4, but it will be out of the game. 16...♘f5 was preferable. The knight is more active on f5, controlling the mobility of the bishop on c5 by controlling the d4-square and also keeping the option to drop back to d6:

A) In case of 17.♘c6 ♙f7 18.cxb5 axb5 19.♘a7, like in the game, Black has 19...♘d6! when the knight joins the game. After 20.♙xd6 ♖xa7 21.♙xf4 ♙e6 the endgame a pawn down should be a relatively easy draw as the opposite-coloured bishops and the white extra pawn being on the kingside mean that White won't be able to capitalize on it;

B) 17.♖ab1 ♙f7 18.cxb5 axb5 19.♖xb5 ♙a6 20.♖b4 ♖hd8 and White is a pawn up, but Black has managed to complete his development and activate his pieces. White's pieces on the queenside are awkwardly placed and in addition to the opposite-coloured bishops, these factors give Black excellent drawing chances.



17.♘c6

Fischer continues forcefully. The threat is 18.♖d8.

17.h4!? was curious, a move that we have got accustomed to seeing thanks to the modern engines. It's not an easy move to make because White has promising play on the queen-side, though Fischer will come to this idea later on. After 17...♘h4 18.♖e1+ ♙f7 19.♖e7+ ♙f6 20.♖xc7 ♘f5 Black is still somehow holding.

17...♙e6

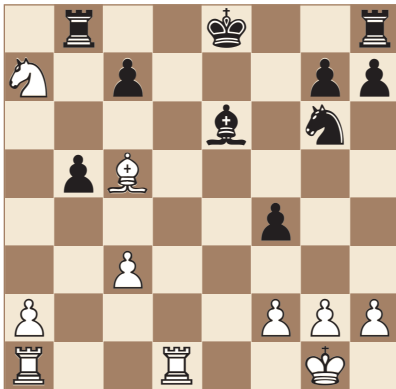
17...♙d7 was a good alternative, but Black needs to find an insane move to survive after 18.cxb5 axb5 19.♘a7, which is 19...♖f8!!.. The idea is to enable the rook to join the game via the f6-square, but to actually have this move crop up in one's thoughts would be close to a miracle. The point is that after 20.♙xf8 ♘xf8 the knight on a7 is trapped and after 21.♖xd7 ♙xd7 22.♘xb5 c5 Black has enough activity for the pawn.

18.cxb5 axb5 19.♘a7

Fischer goes after the pawn on b5. 19.♞ab1 ♕xa2 20.♞xb5 was an attempt to maximize the activity of White's pieces. Black has only one move to stay in the game: 20...♕d5! when he should survive, but it does look scary.

19...♞b8?!

19...♕c4! was a better way to defend the pawn when 20.a4 continues the attack on the queenside. 20...bxa4 21.♞xa4 ♕e6 may look like wasted time for Black, but he has managed to get rid of the weak pawn on b5. His pieces are still disorganized, but White doesn't have a killer blow here.



20.♞db1!

Fischer leaves the rook on a1 to defend the pawn on a2 and piles up the pressure on the b5-pawn.

20...♙f7

If 20...♕c4, now 21.a4! has a much bigger impact and White wins the pawn on b5.

21.♙xb5 ♞hd8

Portisch has given up the pawn to finish his development. He still has fighting chances.

22.♞b4!?

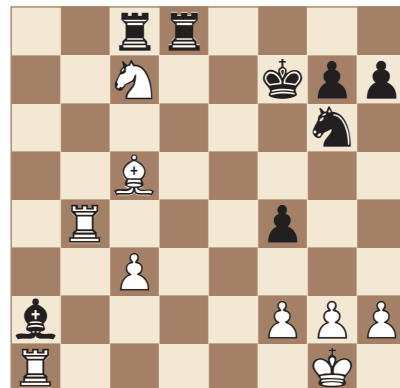
Fischer chooses to continue the tactical battle. This is a characteristic decision reflecting the immense energy he brought to his games. He never shied away from complex calculations, consistently favouring the most aggressive and most concrete solutions.

22.a4 looked simpler, removing the pawn from the attacked square and defending the knight on b5. 22...♞d5 23.♕a7 ♞c8 24.a5 is straightforward enough – all White's pieces are concentrated on the queenside and the passed pawn makes its way forward.

22...♕xa2!

Portisch eliminates the dangerous passed pawn.

23.♙xc7 ♞bc8



24.h4!

Adding to the tension and replying with a counterattack

instead of just defending the knight on c7! Fischer opens a luft for his king, thus attacking the bishop on a2, while at the same time introducing the idea of h5, harassing the knight and attacking the pawn on f4.

24...♖d2

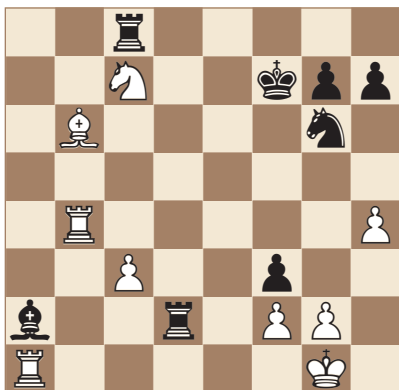
Portisch plays well, activating the rook and defending the bishop on a2.

25.♙b6

Fischer too defends the hanging piece, again threatening 26.h5.

25...f3?

Fischer's opponents rarely survived his relentless pressure. The move is tempting – it removes the pawn from attack and intends to wreck White's kingside structure, but it is tactically flawed. 25...h5! was necessary, stopping White's idea of h5. 26.♖b5 ♘xh4 27.♖xh5 ♘g6 28.♘b5 is still very much in White's favour, but Black has reduced the number of pawns on the board and is still fighting.



26.♙e3!

Immediately taking advantage of the opponent's last move! White's pieces now develop maximum activity and coordination.

26...♖e2 27.♘b5

White has extracted his pieces with tempo and continues to create threats – the immediate one is 28.♘d6+.

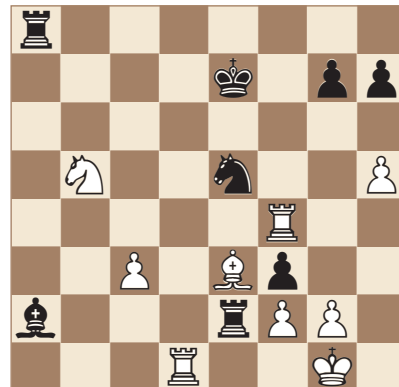
27...♖a8 28.h5

The knight, which has been an onlooker for most of the game, now only gets to be harassed.

28...♘e5 29.♖f4+ ♙e7

If 29...♙g8, then 30.♘d4 ♖b2 31.♘xf3 wins a second pawn.

30.♖d1



Fischer goes for mate, threatening 31.♙c5+.

30...♖c8 31.♖e4 ♙f6 32.♖d6+ ♙f5

33.♖f4+ ♙g5 34.♖xf3+

Black must give up the exchange on e3 to avoid mate, after which he is completely lost, so Portisch resigned.