

<p><b>Byrne,Donald</b>  <b>•Fischer,Robert James</b>  3rd Rosenwald  [A.J.G.]</p> <p>.</p> <p>"THE GAME OF THE CENTURY."  An important re-appraisal.  (For my main chess website.)</p> <p>.</p> <p>(This was ... originally ... )  A BAG-lite game.  January 10th, 2014.  {A new look at this classic  and historic chess game ...  I went back to a totally  clean sheet of paper for  this game, and I tried to  forget everything I knew  about this game. The  chess engines were the  leader here ... and I tried  to always thoroughly  follow their lead.}</p> <p>.</p> <p>Another thing that gave  added impetus to this project  was that one of my PCC  students and I looked at this  game on their laptop in the  fall of 2013. (I bought a spiral-  bound notebook and I  recorded just about all of</p>	<p><b>D97</b> our observations.)</p> <p>.</p> <p>Nearly 20 years has elapsed,  (or - in some cases - even  more time than this ...);  since the first time that I  began to use chess engines  to examine this game ...  they have become much  stronger, (exponentially so);  in the last 5-10 years. Due  to this advancement in the  overall technology, I thought  it would be fun to take yet  another look at it. (I will  stick to the lines of the  various chess engines.)  *****</p> <p>Another under-appreciated  fact was that, in 1956,  Bobby Fischer was a  virtual nobody. However,  his opponent was one of the  top players in the USA ...  and #65 in the whole  world!!!! (See below.)  #1.) Samuel Reshevsky (2752)  #2.) Larry Evans (2640)  #3.) Arthur Bisguiser (2612)  #4.) Donald Byrne (2589)  [ Notice that Donald ...  in those days ... was even  higher rated than his  (later) much more famous</p>
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older brother!!!!!! Of course, in 1974, the elder R. Byrne went all the way to the quarter-finals of the Candidates Matches, losing only to GM Boris Spassky. {Source: The CM website.} ]

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I have analyzed the opening before, I don't think that theory has changed that much since I first examined this game. (The game begins as a Reti, and then it will transpose to a Grunfeld, Russian System.)  
**1.Nf3 Nf6 ; 2.c4 g6 ; 3.Nc3 Bg7 ; 4.d4 0-0 ; 5.Bf4 d5 ; 6.Qb3 dxc4 ; (!)**  
6...c7-c6; is the choice advocated by the new (CB) "Power-Book."

(Diagram)

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However, Fischer's move is much sharper and leads to a different type of game.

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**7.Qxc4 c6™ ; (No choice.)**

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X A B C D E F G H Y
8 r n l w - t k + (
7 p p p - p p v p '
6 - + - + - n p + &
5 + - + - + - + - %
4 - + p P - v - + $
3 + Q N - + N + - #
2 P P - + P P P P "
1 R - + - K L + R ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

One author actually criticized this move, (at the time that this game was first played); but the engines all agree that it was 100% best and/or forced.

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**8.e4 Nbd7 ; (Maybe - '!?')**

This is a solid move ... and I do not believe that there is anything fundamentally wrong with it. However, I have to agree with many of the engines that 8...b5; was a slightly more active move for Black.

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[ RR8...b5 ; (!) - Fritz 13. ]

X A B C D E F G H Y  
 8 r + l ♖ - t k + (   
 7 ♖ ♖ + n ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ '   
 6 - + ♖ + - ♖ ♖ + &   
 5 + - + - + - + - %   
 4 - + Q ♖ ♖ ♖ - + \$   
 3 + - ♖ - + ♖ + - #   
 2 ♖ ♖ - + - ♖ ♖ ♖ "   
 1 ♖ - + - ♖ ♖ L + R! [   
 x a b c d e f g h y

.  
 One thing that Fischer had  
 in common with Morphy  
 as that if you got caught  
 with your King in the center,  
 they both could whip up a  
 nice attack ...  
 almost out of thin air!

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**9.Rd1** , (Center.)

Most engines prefer Be2,  
 yet this move (also)  
 places Black under a great  
 deal of pressure here.

[An interesting line would be:  
 RR9.e5!? Nb6! ; (hmm)  
 Seemingly best.

( 9...Nd5!? ; 10.Nxd5 cxd5 ;  
 Now 11.QxP/d5, ('?') allows  
 Black to play the surprising  
 shot of 11...NxP/e5! "=/+ "

11.Qb3™ Qb6! ;  
 12.Qxb6 axb6!,, ).

10.Qc5! , (Best!?)

This seems to be the move  
 indicated as being best by  
 all of the engines here.

( RR10.exf6!? Nxc4 ;  
 11.fxg7 Kxg7 ;  
 12.Bxc4 Bg4<sup>3</sup> ).

10...Nfd5÷ , (mostly unclear)  
 and Black may be slightly  
 better in this position. ]

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 Now Black plays a pretty  
 good move ... a young  
 Bobby Fischer plays his  
 Knight to the b6-square,  
 in order to free his QB,  
 with a gain of time.

Some pundits (also)  
 criticized this move as  
 well, however, most  
 engines confirm that it is ...  
 (ABSOLUTELY!!!) the best  
 move for Black in this  
 particular position.

**9...Nb6** ; (!) **10.Qc5!** , (Yes!)  
 Many of the authors/pundits  
 heavily criticized this move ...

(at the time when this game was first played); ... as being grossly bad or simply completely inferior. (I have always liked it and many of the better engines - today - also choose Qc5 for White in this position.)

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[ RR10.Qb3!? Nh5! ;  
11.Be3 Be6! ;  
12.Qa3 Qd6!= ]

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Now many of the engines will want to play ...Be6; or even ...a5; here. Yet I greatly prefer Fischer's move ... simply because it greatly cranks up the heat/pressure in this game.

**10...Bg4! ; 11.Bg5!?** , ('?!'/'?')

White (also) plays a move with the deliberate intention of playing sharp and uncompromising chess. However, (today); there is no doubt that this move is an error, and allows a young Bobby Fischer a chance to play brilliantly.

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I also wanted to share an

interesting observation with you, and this is one you would not be aware of ... unless you have been using engines for more than 10-15 years. (At a minimum.) When the engines first came out, many of them wanted to play Bg5 here ... They also could think all day, and not discover anything wrong with Bg5. Now they immediately notice a fairly large downturn in the "scores" of the position and they also begin to see ... - almost immediately - the win for Black.

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[ 1 11.Be2! , "+/=" ]

(Diagram)

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The stage is now set for some of the greatest tactical shots ever played by ANY chess prodigy!

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**11...Na4!!** ; (Maybe - '!!!')

X A B C D E F G H Y  
 8 r + - ♔ - t k + ( {  
 7 ♙ ♙ + - ♙ ♙ ♚ ♙ '  
 6 - ♖ ♙ + - ♖ ♙ + &  
 5 + - ♔ - + - ♚ - %  
 4 - + - ♟ ♟ + l + \$  
 3 + - ♖ - + ♖ + - #  
 2 ♟ ♟ - + - ♟ ♟ ♟ "  
 1 + - + ♖ ♚ l + ♖ !  
 x a b c d e f g h y

(Super <nearly  
unbelievable?> chess!!!)

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A young Bobby does not miss his chance to play a (very good) surprise move in this position. (Students are routinely stunned and show obvious disbelief when I show them this particular bolt of chess lightning.)

(Diagram)

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I will also note that almost none of the students - that I ever studied this game with -

X A B C D E F G H Y  
 8 r + - ♔ - t k + ( {  
 7 ♙ ♙ + - ♙ ♙ ♚ ♙ '  
 6 - + ♙ + - ♖ ♙ + &  
 5 + - ♔ - + - ♚ - %  
 4 n + - ♟ ♟ + l + \$  
 3 + - ♖ - + ♖ + - #  
 2 ♟ ♟ - + - ♟ ♟ ♟ "  
 1 + - + ♖ ♚ l + ♖ ! [  
 x a b c d e f g h y

will ever pick this move and will usually play something mundane like 11...Re8; in this particular position.

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**12.Qa3™** , (Best/box/forced.)

Again, Byrne plays the best move here, yet many authors slammed Byrne for playing his Queen to "an inferior square" at this juncture in this game. (Maybe 12.Qa3!)

[White gets into more trouble with the capture on a4 ... </=

< 12.Nxa4?! Nxe4!! ;

**A)** Another possibility was:

RR13.Qb4!? a5 ;

14.Qxe7 Nxe5 ;

15.Qxg5 Re8+ ;  
 16.Kd2 , ("Box?")  
 This was probably forced.

( Even worse would be:

< 16.Be2? Qxg5 ;  
 17.Nxg5 Bxe2-+ ).

16...Bxf3 ; (P-structure.)

17.Qxd8 Raxd8 ;

18.gxf3 Rxd4+ ;

19.Kc2 Rxa4-+ ;

**B)** 13.Bxe7 ,  
 (\*SIGH\*) "Might as well."  
 {White does not really  
 have a good move at  
 this point.}

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(Back to the main line  
 of this whole variation.)

Nxc5! ; 14.Bxd8 Re8+! ;  
 15.Be2 Nxa4 ; 16.Bg5 Bxf3! ;  
 17.gxf3 Nxb2 ; 18.Rd2 Nc4 ;  
 19.Rd1 h6 ; 20.Bc1 Rad8!-+  
 .

Black has a won game.  
 (Although the second player  
 only has one Pawn, this must  
 be an overwhelming position  
 for Black ... White's Pawn  
 structure is in tatters, the  
 1st player's pieces are in  
 a state of confusion, and  
 White's d-Pawn is probably

doomed as well.) ]

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Black's next move appears  
 to strengthen White's center,  
 but even in chess, appearances  
 can be >>> (sometimes ... very)  
 deceiving.

**12...Nxc3! ; 13.bxc3 Nxe4! ;**

Fischer does not hesitate to  
 sacrifice. Meanwhile Byrne  
 must either meet the challenge  
 here ... or slink away in defeat.

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X A B C D E F G H Y
8 r + - ♔ - t k + (
7 p p + - p p ♖ p '
6 - + p + - + p + &
5 + - + - + - ♜ - %
4 - + - ♟ n + l + $
3 ♚ - ♟ - + N + - #
2 P + - + - ♟ ♟ ♟ "
1 + - + R ♞ L + R! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

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I wonder if Byrne was a little  
 embarrassed here? C'mon,  
 think about it! He has only  
 played 13 moves ... and he

is already in trouble!

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Now all the engines like Be3 or Bf4 for White. (But Black would still be much better.)

**14.Bxe7!? Qb6!** ; (Sharpest.)

According to several engines, 14...Qd5; might be best here for Black. Yet this tame and uninspiring play would NOT have resulted in one of the most memorable chess games ever played!!!

(I would even venture this opinion at this point:

if Fischer had played

14...Qd5;    ... ..

... today, no one would even care about this particular game!)

[The computer - which is not hampered by emotions or any predetermined prejudice - chooses the following line:  
RR14...Qd5!? ; - Fritz 13.  
15.Bxf8 Bxf8 ; 16.Qb3 Qxb3 ;  
17.axb3 Re8 ; 18.Ra1!? ,  
This is an attempt by White to avoid the disaster which is certain to arrive shortly.  
( Even worse is:

< **18.Bc4 Bxf3 ; 19.gxf3 Nxc3+**  
;

when White simply gets to play the endgame ... and in many cases, the first player will be down two pawns. ).

18...Bxf3! ; 19.gxf3 Ng3+ ;  
20.Be2 Nxe2! ; 21.Kd2 Nf4 ;  
22.Rhe1 Ra8!--+ . "+/-"

Black has a won endgame:  
White has a busted Pawn skeleton and his opponent has two healthy minors for the Rook. ]

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White's next move, while being identified as best by just about all of the chess engines ... is also kind of sad! (Poor Byrne!! Bobby is already dreaming of a direct attack on the White King.

Meanwhile Donald Byrne has a little egg on his face, as he still has not completed his opening development!)

**15.Bc4 Nxc3! ; 16.Bc5!** ,  
(Desperado?)

Once again, this move ... which might have been best or forced for White ... really looks like the only intelligent play that would



keep Byrne in the game.

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[ RR16.Qxc3?! Rae8 ;  
17.Qe3™ Qc7 ;  
18.Bxf8 Qa5+ ;  
19.Kf1 Rxe3 ;  
20.fxe3 Bxf8-+ ]

X A B C D E F G H Y  
8 r + - + - t k + ( {  
7 p p + - + p v p '  
6 - w p + - + p + &  
5 + - v - + - + - %  
4 - + L P - + I + \$  
3 W - n - + N + - #  
2 P + - + - P P P "  
1 + - + R k - + R !  
x a b c d e f g h y

One might think that White  
was slowly gaining the  
upper hand in this game.

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Fischer's next move is both  
subtle and magnificent, I

also feel that it is somewhat  
under-appreciated.

**16...Rfe8+!!** ; (Artistry!!!)

The excellence of this move  
should not be under-estimated.  
(The box likes 16...Nb5!, which  
is OK, but it is NOT beautiful ...  
and is certainly not as brilliant  
nor as marvelous as what  
Bobby Fischer actually played!!!)

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Really great chess isn't about  
just dry technique and perfect  
moves on the chess-board ...  
it is also about the beautiful  
and very unexpected moves ...  
which thrill the very soul!

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[ RR16...Nb5! , - Fritz 13.  
(On a small, perhaps  
weaker tablet/laptop.) ]

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**17.Kf1™** , (100% forced.)  
Byrne had no choice here ...  
no real choice at all.

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[Worse/inferior was:  
< 17.Kd2? Ne4+ ;  
18.Kc2 Qc7!-+ ;  
and Black has a  
won game. ]



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X A B C D E F G H Y
8 r + - + r + k + ( {
7 p p + - + p v p '
6 - w p + - + p + &
5 + - v - + - + - %
4 - + L P - + I + $
3 W - n - + N + - #
2 P + - + - P P P "
1 + - + R + K + R !
x a b c d e f g h y

```

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Now ... ..  
the stage has been set and  
all of the actors are in place.

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Now Fischer plays one of the  
most amazing moves of the  
whole of the 20th Century.  
**17...Be6!!** ; (Maybe - '!!!')  
The shot heard round the  
(chess) world ... ..

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I also cannot help but mention  
that R. Fine awarded this move  
FOUR exclams in his book!!!!  
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[Black can still lose here ...  
as the following variation  
clearly proves: </=  
< 17...Nb5?! ; 18.Bxf7+! Kxf7? ;  
This - seemingly forced -  
(re)capture ... will get  
Black into a lost game.  
(Maybe - '??')  
19.Qb3+ Be6 ; 20.Ng5+ Kg8 ;  
21.Nxe6 Qa5? ; (Hmmm.)  
White hangs on?!?!?

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(Prior to the advancement  
of computer engines, this  
natural move - saving the BQ -  
would not even be questioned.)

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22.Nd8+! Kh8 ; 23.Nf7+ Kg8 ;  
24.Nh6+ Kh8 ; 25.Qg8+ Rxcg8 ;  
26.Nf7# . (Checkmate.) ]

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. .  
**18.Bxb6** , (S - the bait?)  
Byrne grabs the BQ, but  
by now "The Donald" did  
not really have a good  
alternative here.

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[The machine prefers:  
RR18.Qxc3 Qxc5! ;  
19.dxc5 Bxc3-+ ;  
Yet I can understand why  
D. Byrne did not like this

line for White ... the Queens  
are off and the first player  
will be down one (or two!!!)  
Pawns for the rest of the  
coming endgame. ]

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Another "comical" variation  
would have to be: </=

< 18.Bxe6? Qb5+! ;

19.Bc4 Qxc4+ ;

20.Kg1 Ne2+ ; 21.Kf1 Ng3+ ;

22.Kg1 Qf1+ ; 23.Rxf1 Ne2# .

[The only reason that I give  
this line here is that it is  
(IMO) very rare to have a  
game where BOTH SIDES  
could have been caught in  
a smothered mate!] ]

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Now we see a very unusual  
tactical sequence here:

Fischer uses a windmill-type  
of device ... simply to change  
the position in his favor.

[This type of tactical ploy  
is rare in master-level chess,  
most big-time players ...  
(in the modern age, today);  
would resign before facing  
such a hurricane of shots.]

**18...Bxc4+ ; 19.Kg1 Ne2+! ;**

**20.Kf1 Nxd4+! ; 21.Kg1 Ne2+ ;**

**22.Kf1 Nc3+! ; 23.Kg1 axb6 ;**  
(Really - '!')

Hits the WQ and does not  
leave D. Byrne a lot of choices.

(I have studied this game  
with many students over  
the years, they almost  
always pick the inferior  
move of 23... ♖x! /d1.)

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**24.Qb4 Ra4! ;** (Covers c4.)

Maybe - '!!'

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This last hit on the Queen is  
the last refinement that Bobby  
Fischer had to have foreseen  
when starting this combination.

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Now Black wins material.

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(Diagram)

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Fischer had to have foreseen  
just about all the consequences  
of this whole tactical landslide.

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Now the WQ is almost  
completely out of options ...

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X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + - + r + k + (
7 + p + - + p ♔ p '
6 - ♙ p + - + p + &
5 + - + - + - + - %
4 r ♕ l + - + - + $
3 + - ♜ - + N + - #
2 P + - + - ♟ ♟ ♟ "
1 + - + R + - ♞ R! [
x a b c d e f g h y

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all that is left (for White)  
is to "grub" one Pawn ...  
and it is a nearly useless,  
doubled-pawn, at that ...  
on the very unimportant  
b6-square.

**25.Qxb6 Nxd1 ; 26.h3 Rxa2! ;**

I like this ... and so does  
Houdini. (I was analyzing  
this game with a friend on  
his laptop at a local book-  
store just a few days ago,  
and his computer chose  
playing the Bishop to d5,  
instead of the text move.)

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[ RR26...Bd5 ; - Fritz 13.  
(On a newer laptop.) ]

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X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + - + r + k + (
7 + p + - + p ♔ p '
6 - ♕ p + - + p + &
5 + - + - + - + - %
4 - + l + - + - + $
3 + - + - + N + P #
2 r + - + - ♟ ♟ + "
1 + - + n + - ♞ R! [
x a b c d e f g h y

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Now - in just a few moves -  
Black will begin an "all-out"  
King hunt.

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The rest of the game really  
needs no further commentary ...  
if you have any questions,  
I will simply refer you to  
my original analysis of this  
historic chess game.

(I should also add, for the  
sake of being complete,  
that after 31.Nf3, Fritz 13  
prefers 31...Kg7.)

**27.Kh2 Nxf2 ; 28.Re1 Rxe1 ;**  
**29.Qd8+ Bf8™ ; 30.Nxe1 Bd5! ;**  
**31.Nf3 Ne4 ; 32.Qb8 b5! ;**  
**33.h4 h5! ; 34.Ne5 Kg7! ;**

Of course, White is quite lost.

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X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - ♔ - + - ♙ - + (
7 + - + - + ♙ ♙ - '
6 - + ♙ + - + ♙ + &
5 + ♙ + ♙ ♙ - + ♙ %
4 - + - + ♙ + - ♙ $
3 + - + - + - + - #
2 ♙ + - + - + ♙ ♙ "
1 + - + - + - + - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

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Now Black is prepared to finish this historic contest by hunting down the WK.

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White's next move was probably deliberate, (Nd3 would have slightly prolonged the game). [White, on his 36th move, should have played Kh2 ... when Fritz sees a mate in like 15-18 moves.]

**35.Kg1!? Bc5+! ; Best.**

**36.Kf1!? Ng3+ ;**

**37.Ke1 Bb4+!? ;**

**38.Kd1 Bb3+ ;**

**39.Kc1 Ne2+ ;**

**40.Kb1 Nc3+ ;**

**41.Kc1 Rc2#! , Mate. (#)**

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Donald Byrne could have resigned, but he gallantly allowed the mate to occur on the board, which further adds to the charm of this epic struggle.

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"The GAME of The Century!"

- GM Hans Kmoch

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[Also possible was: 41...Ba3# . ]

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