

Spassky, Boris V **E80**
• Penrose, Jonathan **2770**
 Palma de Mallorca (11) **2610**
 [A.J. Goldsby I] 1969

This tournament was an enormous triumph for one of my original chess heroes. (Bent Larsen, who won clear first ... just 1/2 point ahead of Tigran Petrosian.)

However, Spassky shared the "Best-Played Game" for this effort against J. Penrose ... which is both pretty and (at the time) highly original.

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Source for the ratings was the "Chess Metrics" website. (The ratings are probably low, -50 {or more} ... compared to modern ratings. However, they do give a close estimate or a guideline to what these players might have been rated today.)

1.d4 Nf6 ; 2.c4 g6 ;
3.Nc3 Bg7 ; 4.e4 d6 ;
5.f3 , (Samisch.)

Spassky used this opening system many times in his chess career, although he

seemed to play just about every line under the sun.

[The main line is: 5.Be2 , see my GOTM site for more on this particular opening.]

5...c6 ; (counterstrike/b5)
 Penrose responds with the time-proven "Byrne System" which is still a good line for Black, even today.

6.Be3 a6 ; 7.Bd3 Nbd7! ;
 Black used to push his QNP hereabouts ... until Spassky just about refuted that whole concept in a game with GM Lubosh Kavalek.

[For more on this opening ... and the current state of modern opening theory ... see MCO-14, page # 613; col. # 48, and all notes.]

The "book line" today is 8.a2-a4, however Spassky goes his own way.

8.Nge2 b5 ; 9.Qd2 Bb7 ;
10.0-0 0-0 ; 11.b3 e5 ;
 Thus far, according to the chess

engines, the position is equal.

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XABCDEFGHIY
8r + - ♖ - ♔ k + (
7+ l + n + p ♗ p '
6p + p ♗ - ♗ p + &
5+ p + - ♗ - + - %
4- + P ♗ P + - + $
3+ P ♗ N L ♗ P + - #
2P + - ♗ N + P ♗ "
1R - + - + R ♗ - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y
    
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Black can open the center and can play on either side of the board.

Spassky now plays much like one of his predecessors ... (S. Tarrasch) and simply opts to gain (and keep!) more space ... and also try to prevent Black from playing his standard break of ...f7-f5. (B. Ivkov - in the Informant - did not like Nd1, preferring {instead} 13.Na4. However, the difference between the two scores is infinitesimal,

so it is really more a matter of taste than a concrete value judgment.)
12.d5! b4 ; 13.Nd1 c5 ;
 Soloviov questions this ... and recommends (instead) the capture on d5. But the difference between the two moves (in the estimations of the computer) are very small ...

14.g4!? Kh8 ; **15.Nf2 Ng8 ; 16.Ng3 Qh4!?** ; (foray)
 Black's last move was a little risky, DF14 prefers ...P-QR4. (The BQ is temporarily out of play, Spassky exploits this by opening a file on the other side of the board.)

17.Kg2 h6 ; 18.a3! a5 ; 19.Ra2! Ndf6!? ; (dub?)
 Black goes for piece play ... but the computer finds a slightly more logical response ... that would have prevented White from dominating the a-file.

[The following line: (>/=)
 RR19...Rfb8 ; 20.Rfa1 Qd8! ;
 21.h4² , "+/="]

probably represents a small improvement over the game, although White retains a solid edge here.]

Now, thanks to his previous preparations, White penetrates down the a-file and trades off both sets of Rooks.

(>/= 20...Rab8!; was a definite improvement over the game, although White still retains a sizable advantage.)

20.Rfa1 Nh7!? ; **21.axb4 axb4** ; **22.Rxa8 Rxa8** ; **23.Rxa8 Bxa8** ; **24.Qa2 Bb7** ; **25.Qa7** ,

This was good enough for a solid advantage, although simply 25.g5!, (which many of the engines find right away); may represent a significant improvement for White.

(Soloviov awards Qa7 an exclamation here for White.)

[1 25.g5! Nxc5 ; 26.Qa7± , '+']

25...Qe7 ; **26.Be2! Nhf6** ; White is solidly better here,

although the severely blocked nature of the position indicates that Black may gain a draw unless White plays accurately.



The position (above) shows a classic space advantage for White ... which Spassky begins to exploit in superlative fashion. (Spassky realizes that Black's pieces are mostly spectators, so he plays to open his game.)

27.f4! exf4 ; **28.Bxf4 Ne8™** ; **29.Qb8 Bd4!?** ; **30.Nd3 f6** ; **31.Bf3 Qd7** ; **32.h4** , (!?)

This is good, some writers even award this move an exclamation.

However, Houdini & Deep Fritz 14 seem to find a better and quicker way to win for White ... (see just below).

[Probably best was:

1 32.Ne2! Be5 ; 33.Nxe5! fxe5 ;
 34.Bxe5+!! dxe5 ; 35.Qxe5+
 Nef6 ;
 36.Nf4! g5!? ; 37.Ne6 Bc8 ;
 38.Qb8+- , (decisive)
 with a won game for White.]

Now the box seems to show that 32...Bc8[]; was best for Black, missing this, Penrose finds himself in even greater difficulties. (1 34...Ne7!?)
32...Kh7 ; 33.h5!? g5 ;
34.Bd2 Be5!? ; 35.Be3 Ne7 ;
 DF14 likes this as Black's best move.

(Soloviov recommends ...Qc8; here as the best move for Black.)

36.Nxe5 fxe5 ;
 The critical position ...

Black is so tied up that it is



only natural that a sacrifice would destroy the organic balance of the position. (White winds up with two very dangerous, connected passed Pawns.)

(The box likes 39.Qb2, for White, but the difference in evals is not great.)

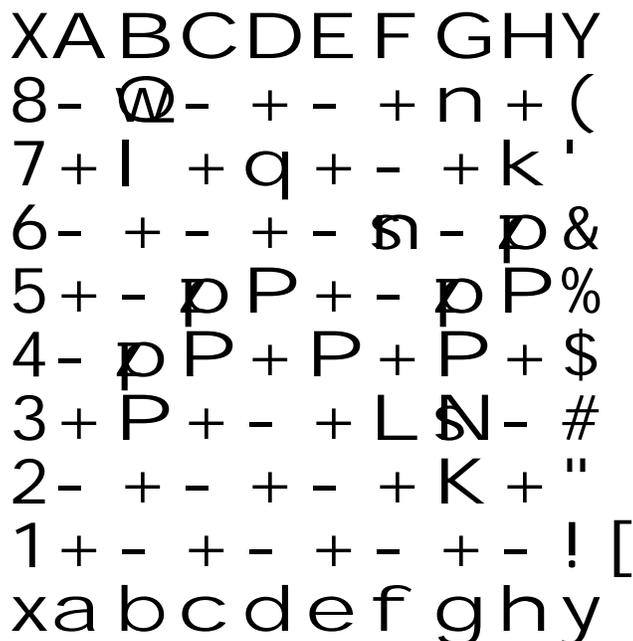
37.Bxc5!! dxc5 ; 38.Qxe5 Ng8 ; 39.Qb8 Nef6? ; (error)

This move was a mistake and is exploited by Spassky in his typically ruthless fashion.

[After the following continuation:

1 39...Ngf6™ ; 40.Nf5 Qc8 ;
 41.Qe5 Qd7 ; 42.Ne3± , '+/'
 White is clearly better but no

easy route to the win is found.]



Black has a small material edge, a minor piece for two Pawns. However, White's central wedge of foot-soldiers threatens to simply advance with devastating effect.

40.Nf5! Ne7 ; 41.Nxh6! Nexd5! ;
A nice tactic, simply capturing with the Black King loses to Qf8+, when Black's position is nearly resignable.

42.cxd5 , This wins, but ...

[RR All of the engines show that:
>/= 1 42.exd5! Kxh6 ;
43.Qf8+ Qg7 ; 44.Qxc5 , '+' (decisive)
when it is an easy win for the first player here ...
and this this was a clear improvement over the actual course of the game.]

42...Kxh6 ; 43.Qf8+ Qg7 ; 44.Qxc5 Nd7 ; (Hmmm.)
This loses even more quickly ...

>/= 44...Kh7[]; was better, although even after an exchange of Queens, White can march his King to the center and I could not find any way for Black to save his position. (Most of the engines show that Black had to play
>/= 47...QxP/e5[]; failing this, his game falls completely apart.)

45.Qd6+! Kh7 ; 46.e5! Kh8 ; 47.h6! Qh7? ; 48.e6! Qc2+!? ; 49.Kg3 , "+/-" Black Resigns.

Penrose gives up, he can (now) see that White will promote his e-pawn.

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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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An incredible game by Spassky, who shows great technique and gives a model lesson in how to exploit this type of <standard> advantage in space.

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[For a slightly different view of this game, see Andy Soltis's book: "The Best Chess Games

of Boris Spassky," Game # 65 and page # 266.

(See also Informant # 08; and game # 615.)

See also the excellent book: "Boris Spassky's Selected Games," (400) by Sergei Soloviov. Game # 210, page # 269.]

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