

Chess Barbs

by Jude Acers (US senior master)
TAL WELL AGAIN, CHAMP
AGAIN!

Recently recovered from a long-term kidney ailment, chess whizz Mikhail Tal brilliantly blazed his way through 21 rounds of USSR Championship competition at Baku to win this year's top Soviet chess title.

A former world champion, Tal generated as much excitement around the chess globe during the late 1950s and early 1960s as present world champion Robert Fischer churns up today. Tal's forte was always the imaginative art of sacrificial attack, with natural chess sense taking priority over cold, emotionless logic. Then he fell increasingly ill, and his capacity for fighting chess fell as well.

But all that is changed now! Tal's results in recent events speak for themselves, winning a strong tournament at Sukhumi, achieving the highest win percentage among all players at the chess olympics at Skopje, and now placing first ahead of 11 grandmasters and 11 Soviet national masters (all champions of their respective USSR republics) at Baku. Tal scored nine victories (more than anyone else) and drew an even dozen games to emerge as the tournament's only undefeated competitor.

International grandmaster Vladimir Tukmakov finished a clear second, and since Tal has already been seeded for the upcoming cycle of candidates' tourneys Tukmakov will go on to participate in the

interzonal contest with two out of the three players who tied for third (Gennady Kuzmin, Mikhail Mukhin and last year's USSR champion, Vladimir Savon).

White: M. Tal. Black: M. Mukhin. XL USSR Championship, Baku, 1972. Sicilian Defense 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cd 4 Nd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bc4 e6 7 Bb5 b5 8 0-0 Bb7 9 Re1 Nbd7 10 Bg5 Nc5 11 Bd5 b4 12 Bb7 Nb7 13 Nd5 ed 14 edch Kd7 15 c3 b3 16 Qb3 Nc5 17 Qc4 Qc8 18 Nc6 h6 19 Bf6 gf 20 Re3 Kc7 21 b4 Rg8, and Black resigned.

White: M. Tal. Black: L. Shamkovich. XL USSR Championship, Baku, 1972. Caro-Kann Defense. 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 e6 4 Ne4 Nd7 5 Nf3 Ngf6 6 Nc3 7 Bd3 c5 8 Qe2 cd 9 Nd4 Bc5 10 Nb3 Bd6 11 Bg5 a6 12 g-0-0 Qc7 13 Kb1 0-0 14 Ne4 Be5 15 f4 Bf4 16 Nf6ch Nf6 17 Bf6 gf 18 Qg4ch Kh8 19 Rhf1 Be5 20 Bh7 f5 21 Qh4 Kg7 22 Rf3 Re8 23 g4 f4 24 g5 Kf8 25 Rf4 Bf4 26 Qh6ch Ke7 27 Qf6ch Kf8 28 g6 Bh6 29 Rf1 Black resigns.

White: D. Bronstein. Black: M. Tal. XL USSR Championship, Baku, 1972. Larsen's Opening 1 b3 d5 2 Bb2 Bg4 3 h3 Bh5 4 Nf3 Nd7 5 e3 e6 6 Be2 Ngf6 7 d3 Bd6 8 Nbd2 Qe7 9 a3 c6 10 c4 0-0 11 g4 Bg6 12 Nh4 Ne8 13 Ng6 fg 14 h4 b5 15 g5 bc 16 cd e5 17 b4 a5 18 c5 Bb8 19 Qa4 Qe6 20 Rg1 Nc7 21 Bg1 Qf7 22 0-0-0 ab 23 Qc6 ba 24 Qd7 abch 25 Kb2 Ba7 26 Qf7ch Rf7 27 Rg1 Bc5 28 Nb3 Ba3ch 29 Kc2 Re7 30 Kd3 Rb8 31 Na5 e4ch 32 Kd4 Rb4ch 33 Kc5 Rb5ch 34 Kc6 Ra5 35 Ral Rc5ch 36 Kb6 Na8ch 37 Ka6

Rc6ch 38 Kb5 Rb6ch 39 Ka4 Ra7 mate.

QUESTIONS YOU ASK JUDE ACERS:

Q. Your predictions one year before the Spassky-Fischer match were absolutely right. Yet you did not even crow lightly that you had (1) predicted the score exactly right, predicted that Fischer would have to give up e4 and other favorite systems and (3) predicted that Fischer would forfeit at least two games in the match, but would remain in because of the large stakes! I was really amazed and want to know what you think Spassky will do in the return match Fischer promises to provide in Las Vegas. How long do you think Fischer will stay world champion?

A. First, before you make me into an all-knowing seer, I made these predictions on a theoretical basis. I never for a moment believed the World Chess Federation would disallow all rules, that Spassky would not leave Iceland when Fischer failed to appear as contracted, and, finally, that Fischer was either emotionally or theoretically prepared for the match. It was in my mind a platonian analysis of a match that Fischer would not complete or would not be allowed to complete. If the rules are strictly enforced, I believe Spassky will defeat Fischer by two games in their projected Las Vegas match. In their third world title match (contract agreement) I am sure Fischer will win and retain the world title for a few years. Because Fischer is

absolutely fearless, I believe he will meet the strongest possible opposition constantly for the world title. This means he cannot possibly hold the title for a decade or two, as did Dr. Emanuel Lasker and Wilhelm Steinitz. As a leading Fischer fan recently pointed out: "Who cares if Fischer is world champion this year or ever? What matters is that such a great charismatic hero exists at all. Just seeing him show up for a game is a shock quite often. And think of all the different suits and wardrobe theatrics we may expect in showboat days ahead!"

To be perfectly frank, the odds against Fischer finishing a second Spassky match are very small. I don't think Fischer really wants to go through the ordeal of being in one place at the right time for two months once again. Sorry to disappoint.

One final note: when Fischer failed to arrive for round 1 and ceremonies, I thought that he was simply unprepared emotionally to play at all, not "chicken", as many jealous masters claimed. I therefore bet Russell W. Miller, my star-studded manager, a silver dollar that Spassky would successfully defend his title a day before play began. My silver dollar looked quite shiny after the first round sparring, but alas...my hero has lost. Aren't the good guys always supposed to win? Ah! Good guys don't always wear white, that's it.

Later, I stated in the Chicago Tribune and many other newspapers that I felt Fischer was quite nice, really, a tremendous player, etc., but would quit before round 14. Thank goodness for both promoters and players he did not. A doubt world title match is also doubtful, because Spassky would not play it without his wife, Larissa, and possibly their family.

And those Las Vegas people are putting up a tremendous fee for both players. ...You get the picture. Spassky could not easily take several hundred thousand dollars back to the Soviet Union, has been invited to stay for life at Sammy Davis Jr.'s home, etc., etc.

Spassky has had immense verbal dueling with Soviet politicians and chess bureaucrats. Sound familiar? He doesn't get to play where he should, either!

Q. Is it better to live in the U.S. or the Soviet Union for chess development?

A. For competitive development, a chance to play, the USSR is best. For personal development (I study theory, endgames, etc., when I want), the U.S. is best, in spite of Sir Edmondson. I breathe freely here, and I'm as wild as they come.

Q. Is the Statham tournament important?

A. No, because it is not long enough, is not internationally rated, cannot qualify players to international tournaments and pits 24 or 25 starving chessmasters against all-expense-paid grandmasters. It's what I call a slave system chapee tournament. Addison, Grefe, and I stayed out and watched the other packdogs leap into the air for the few scraps of bacon tossed to them by Mr. Statham in Lone Pine, California. If I won this tournament 20 consecutive times, I would still be totally unable to understand what Robert Byrne goes through at Moscow and Hastings -- killer grandmaster events. Tournaments should guarantee all food and housing for chessmasters or the masters should stay home, period.

Q. I agree with you that Grefe, Tarjan and Commons, especially, are great players and might even be world class with 15 or 20

tough tournaments. But they'll never get paid, will they, if they stupidly play in all these local events for dimes and pennies? Why should the Bay Area chess public pay for what these idiots are giving away for nothing?

A. No comment. You have expressed a point of view. Ask them, not me. I eat daily now.

Q. What would I have to pay Fischer to show up at a memorial chess tournament in honor of my father in Seattle?

A. Fischer asked for and got \$100,000 (plus) for his world title match and (he decided not to play) the world Olympiad. By "got" I mean several reputable business people guaranteed Fischer \$100,000 on board one for the U.S. team if he decided to play. It's reasonable to assume that it will cost you a quarter of a million dollars plus all film rights, just a wild guess. It would still be a bargain if you really want to stage a memorable memorial!

ONE-DAY TOURNAMENT IN WALNUT CREEK

The annual CCCA one-day USCF rated tourney will be held Sunday, Jan. 7, at the Walnut Creek Recreation Center (located on Civic Drive).

Players will compete in a three-round, Round Robin in four-man sections, more or less according to rating. Two tiny money prizes of \$5 and \$3 will be handed out to the winners in each section, but the low entry fee of a mere \$4 (plus USCF membership) is a rarity nowadays.

Time control is set at 40 moves in 90 minutes and 15 moves in 30 minutes thereafter, with round one starting about 10:30 a.m. on Sunday morning. Registration to play takes place at the tournament site from 9-10 a.m. Please bring your own chess sets and clocks.