

(21) *Samuel Reshevsky – Lombardy*
U.S. Championship
New York, December 1957
King's Indian Defense [E99]

By this time, in the final and deciding round for the U.S. Championship, Bobby had retained a half-point lead (over Sammy). He was paired with the black pieces against Abe Turner. He had the better of the pairing. Yet Abe was a strong master and with white could be quite dangerous. And Bobby was only thirteen. He had some psychological disadvantage against his hefty opponent. Abe was an excellent speed player and always played for stakes, but not against the child Bobby, whom in practice he had beaten many games. Word was that both were content with a draw. Bobby was unwilling to risk a loss, altogether forfeiting his grip on sharing first. And on the other hand, Abe was openly unwilling to spoil the kid's tournament! Reshevsky had the worse pairing. I am sure that in his mind, considering he had the white pieces, he expected to win. I had lost a game to him in our match the previous year, my only loss to him so far. But I had drawn eight other games with the former prodigy. Two of these came in the 1955 Rosenwald Tournament and five others in the match. Moreover, it had only been four months since my return from the World Junior, so he certainly had to consider me with some caution. Sammy figured the Turner game would end in a draw, and so it did well before the real conflict began in his game with me. With that draw, Sammy was giving me (and Bobby!) draw odds. A Sammy draw with me would leave Bobby alone in first place. As far as Sammy was concerned, a draw was as good as a loss!

As my game with Sammy reached the late opening stage, Sammy went into a huddle. I therefore took a break from the board and went to the Manhattan Chess Club's main room. There I saw a group of enthusiasts pouring over the game. Among them was Moses Mitchell, a club director. Moe asked me: "How ya doin' Bill?" I answered, "I seem to be all right." "That's funny," Moe quipped. Sammy was out here while you were on move and we asked him the same question for benefit of our amateur analysis!" Moe went on, "Reshevsky said he was 'killing' you!" I shrugged and returned to the board. We were about to reach the point when I would sacrifice a piece (19...♗xh3). Aside from that, I held a time edge of over an hour on the clock. The game was getting more and more complicated and Sammy's time pressure might well have been a factor in the game. Anyway the course of the game speaks for itself.

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2

Sammy almost always played this system and, in fact, was an authority in its theory!

5...0-0 6.♟f3 e5 7.0-0 ♟c6 8.d5

8.♗e3! This system might well bear Reshevsky's name. However, Petrosian should be credited for further developing the system for White. 8...♟g4 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗c1 was the move favored by Reshevsky! (10.♗h4 on the other hand was fancied by Petrosian!).

8...♟e7 9.♟e1

9.♘d2 c5!? Fischer played this against Larsen and won a sharp séance, which became the fourth point in a 6-0 streak! Larsen-Fischer, Denver 1971 – see appendix.

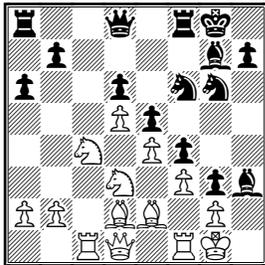
9...♘d7 10.♘d3 f5 11.f3 f4

This method of attack was popularized by Najdorf. White's bishop is often at e3 from where it must retreat to f2 with a loss of tempo. Here, it could be said that White is under slightly more favorable circumstances. However, I was confident that White could enforce a winning queenside breakthrough in time. Black therefore commits himself to a supreme attack on the other flank.

12.♙d2 g5 13.♞c1 ♘g6 14.♘b5 a6 15.♘a3 ♘f6 16.c5 g4

Black can play this quick advance because e4 is not adequately protected.

17.c×d6 c×d6 18.♘c4 g3 19.h3 ♙×h3! (D)



This may have come as a shock to Sammy, who had announced to the players in the outer room of the Manhattan Chess Club that he “was killing” me! I returned to the board to find out what Sammy had in mind.

20.g×h3 ♞d7 21.♘f2 g×f2+ 22.♞h2 ♞e7

Avoiding danger, the queen still assists in defending d6 and prepares to enter the fray against the enemy's already ruptured castle.

23.♞×f2 ♘h5 24.♙b4 ♞ad8 25.♞d3 ♘h4

Black's attack had better succeed, for he no longer has any pieces guarding the queenside. If d6 falls, Black will yield the point.

26.♞g1 ♘g3

Making useless the presence of White's rooks on the g-file, but not Black's.

27.♙f1 ♞f6 28.♞c2 ♞g6 29.♙e1

Relieving pressure against d6 by making a false threat against g3, which cannot be captured without worsening matters.

29...♙h6!

This makes impossible the capture at g3 because the bishop then comes to f4.

30.♘b6 ♖h8!

Now the other rook enters the battle of the bulge at g3.

31.♙g2

31.♖c8 ♖xc8 32.♗xc8 ♜c7 33.♞c3 (33.♗a7 ♜c5++) 33...♗xf1 34.♖xf1 ♖g2+ 35.♞h1 ♜d7!-+.

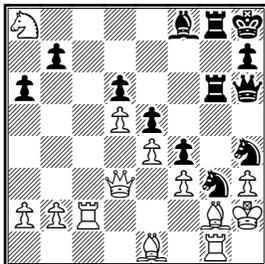
31...♞dg8 32.♖c8 ♙f8!

Naturally Black retains his rook for the attack. The battle will be decided on the g-file. Verdun is surrounded! In chess the superior force prevails!

33.♞c2 ♜g7

Tripling heavy pieces on the file prepares for the slaughter. I believe Sammy might well have resigned here, were his rival one of the world class candidates. But Sammy was obliged to continue, since he retained hopes of catching Bobby for the title.

34.♗a8 ♜h6! (D)



There is no defense. White is now subject to mate on the h-file as well! 34...♞h6!? 35.♖c7 ♜g5 36.♗h1 ♗xf3+ 37.♞xf3 ♖xh3+ 38.♞xh3 ♜h6+ 39.♞g2 ♗e2+ 40.♞f2 ♗xg1-+.

35.♙f1 ♗xf1+ 36.♖xf1 ♜g7

White staves off mate only by the heavy loss of material. With my choice I was attracted to the win of massive material as guarantee of victory. But I should have ended this game appropriately with mate! 36...♗f5!! 37.exf5 (37.♞h1 ♞xh3+ 38.♖h2 ♞xh2+ 39.♞xh2 ♖h6+ 40.♗h4 ♖xh4#) 37...♞xh3+! 38.♞xh3 ♖h6+ 39.♗h4 ♖g3+ 40.♞h2 ♖xh4#.

37.♞e2 ♖g2+ 38.♞xg2 ♗xg2 39.♞g1 ♗xe1 40.♖xg7 ♙xg7! White resigned. 0-1