

ØYSTEIN BREKKE | FRIDRIK ÓLAFSSON

The Chess Saga of
**FRIDRIK
ÓLAFSSON**

with special contributions from Gudmundur G. Thórarinsson,
Gunnar Finnlaugsson, Tiger Hillarp Persson, Axel Smith, Ian Rogers,
Yasser Seirawan, Jan Timman, Margeir Pétursson and Jóhann Hjartarson

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FOREWORD BY PRESIDENT OF ICELAND GUÐNI TH. JÓHANNESSON

The Republic of Iceland is young. Iceland did not become a fully independent republic until 1944, when it was one of the smallest nations in the world. In the early years of the Republic, Icelanders had to demonstrate to themselves and others that they could stand on their own feet, be a nation among nations. That required economic development, a campaign for control over the fishing grounds around the island, and augmentation of communications and other infrastructure.



But we also had a need for improvements to education and more support for culture and the arts. We built schools and other educational institutions, a National Theatre, a National Museum, libraries and art galleries.

Moreover, we had the opportunity to celebrate Icelanders' achievements in the international arena. Novelist Halldór Laxness won the Nobel Prize for Literature; Icelanders excelled in sports; and scientists made their mark.

And then there was Friðrik Ólafsson. At a young age, he attracted attention for his performance at the chessboard. In 1953, Icelanders celebrated as Friðrik won the Nordic Chess Championship for the first time. Five years later, the nation

rejoiced again when he became Grandmaster, the first Icelander to achieve that tribute.

More victories followed. Throughout his career, Friðrik Ólafsson carried the reputation of his nation around the world. He gained renown for his brilliance at the chessboard, and equally for his refinement and elegance. Thus, Friðrik won the respect and admiration of all Icelanders, as well as vast numbers of chess fans internationally.

In the chess world, Friðrik was elected to high office, serving as president of the World Chess Federation, FIDE. He went on to

establish a chess school in Iceland, and some years ago he once again excelled as a member of the Icelandic team at the World Senior 50+ Team Chess Championship. At that time, more than sixty years had passed since Friðrik first competed for our country.

Last year a fine new biography of Friðrik Ólafsson was published in Icelandic – a fitting tribute to his life and his achievements in chess. Now that is followed by an excellent overview in English, about Friðrik and his chess style. I welcome this initiative and express my thanks to all who have been involved in the publication.

PREFACE

THE CHESS SAGA OF FRIDRIK

Fridrik Ólafsson may be the strongest chess player of the 20th century about whom until now no book existed in any of the big languages. It feels great to present to the world this first book outside Iceland about the chess career of their first and most prominent grandmaster.

During 25 years from about 1955 to 1980 he was one of the world's ten to fifty best players, in spite of coming from remote Iceland and in spite of giving priority also to his studies, his job, his family, and being elected President of FIDE.

Fridrik Ólafsson has had a personal attacking style which you may study and admire in this book, with more than 50 games explained by Fridrik himself. Among his victims are World Champions Tal, Petrosian, Fischer and Karpov, and other top players of the era like Keres, Geller, Korchnoi, Taimanov, Averbakh, Stein, Najdorf, Panno, Larsen, Gligorić, Uhlmann, Benkö, Portisch, Szabo, O'Kelly, Donner and Unzicker, and also somewhat younger players like Hübner, Tukmakov, Savon, Kavalek, Smejkal, Ribli, Sax, Quinteros, Andersson, Timman, Browne, Miles and Seirawan.

The platform of the book is Fridrik's own Icelandic games collection from 1976 "*Vid skákborðid í aldarfjórðung – 50 valdar sóknar skákir*" (*At the chess board for a quarter of a century – 50 selected chess games*). Another appropriate name of his book would have been "50 Attacking Games".

There are many lessons to be learnt here about both how to build an attack and how to carry it out.

The work on an English edition started in Reykjavik 2009 when Fridrik presented to Gunnar Finnlaugsson the handwritten manuscript with a translation of his Icelandic book, made by the late Icelandic chess player and English teacher Björn Jóhannesson. Gunnar later got exclusive game commentaries to this book from grandmasters Tiger Hillarp Persson, Axel Smith, Ian Rogers and Yasser Seirawan, and was permitted to use annotations by Margeir Pétursson, Jóhann Hjartarson and Jan Timman.

Gunnar Finnlaugsson (born 1947) is the Icelandic chess player who moved to the Swedish town Lund in 1976 and kept both his citizenship and enthusiasm for his home country. In 1975 and 77 he had participated in the top group of the Icelandic Championship.

In 2016 Gunnar asked me to take over the writing and





Gunnar Finnlaugsson in Reykjavik 2011.

publishing of this book in English. More than three years later did I realize that the project still waited for me. When back in 1999 I wrote and released a book on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Nordic Chess Federation, I asked Fridrik Ólafsson and Bent Larsen to write one brief chapter each, and I was very grateful that they just did it. Now it is time for me to pay my respect for the chess heritage of Fridrik Ólafsson and his country.

Iceland and Icelandic chess are both something special, and not least for us Norwegians, since this beautiful and to some degree frightening island was settled mainly by Norwegian emigrants from the 9th century onwards. The written accounts of this early history – the famous Icelandic Sagas – disclose that board games – first *hnefatafl* and later chess – were always popular in this country, this due to the long winters.

The Icelandic names are part of the proud history. Contrary to all countries around, the Icelanders still give children a traditional name, combined with the information usually of who is their father, and only in a few cases instead who is their mother. Family names are very rare, so Fridrik Ólafsson tells that the boy is Fridrik and a son of Ólafur. First names are most important. In Iceland “Fridrik against Larsen” is the normal way to mention games between the Nordic chess stars Fridrik Ólafsson and Bent Larsen.

As for Icelandic names in the book, we have tried to get the accents right, like Ólafsson, while instead of the special Icelandic letters *ð* like in Friðrik and *þ* like in Þorbergsson, we usually write Fridrik and Thórbergsson, in English. We make exceptions in the heading of the games, telling in Icelandic who is White and Black.

I thank Gudmundur G. Thórarinnsson (Guðmundur G. Þórarinnsson) who wrote a nice introduction to the book, explaining Fridrik's importance both for his country and for Icelandic chess. He also wrote a text about Fridrik's decisive importance in getting the 1972 World Championship match to Reykjavik.

In 1972 President Kristján Eldjárn decorated Fridrik with the “The Knight of Iron Cross of the Icelandic Falcon Order”, and in 1980 he got “The Great Knight of Iron Cross of the Icelandic Falcon Order” from President Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. Meanwhile Fridrik Ólafsson was elected “Man of the Year” in 1978. He is an honorary member of FIDE since 2014 and honorary citizen of Reykjavik since 2015.

An extra motivation for this book is that the proud Icelandic chess history has been mostly described and printed only in the beautiful, but tiny language, which is read and understood only by 365.000 native Icelanders.

The same applies much to Nordic chess history in general, except for the extra big names of Bent Larsen and Magnus Carlsen. Our Nordic chess history is quite hidden, but not insignificant. While chess writings have been understood and translated between the big European languages like Russian, English, German, French and Spanish, Nordic sources rarely exist even in books and on web pages from major chess history writers.

I met Fridrik for the first time during the Nice Olympiad 1974, when as a young train tourist I got his autograph, among many world stars there, and also took a photo of him at play, which now found its way into this book, together with other photos I took particularly during the next Chess Olympiads.



Grandmaster Tiger Hillarp Persson annotated five games for this book.

My special thanks to everybody who contributed to this book over the years, in addition to the game annotators mentioned already. Gunnar Finnlaugsson created a resource group with the top guys Calle Erlandsson, Johan Sigeman, Axel Smith, Peter Holmgren and Hans Tikkanen, and also Gunnar's wife Gunilla and their son Johannes contributed.

I am happy that the book includes quite many nice photos and also a few drawings. Two valuable sources were the Dutch National Archives at nationaalarchief.nl and the Icelandic Chess Heritage Society website skaksogufelagid.is, and we thank also Calle Erlandsson, Einar S. Einarsson, Bjørn Berg Johansen, the late Arinbjörn Gudmundsson and others, some unidentified, for their valuable contributions.

Further big thanks to the proof-readers Tony Gillam and Hakon Adler and to our graphical designer Tommy Modøl.

And most of all we thank Fridrik Ólafsson, whose chess games we are given the privilege to share with the world through this book. More than 50 of them are presented with his own lucid and instructive commentaries written in the 1970s, long before chess engines took over. I have let the engines Stockfish and Komodo add only a few critical corrections and updates, printed in parentheses.

It has been a nice journey for me to see and study many of Fridrik's games for the Chess Saga. Altogether the book has 118 of his games, including four game finishes. It is a rich treasure to enjoy.

Drammen, January 2021

Øystein Brekke



Fridrik beside the bust of him in the Reykjavik Chess Club (Tauffélag Reykjavíkur), which was unveiled on January 26th 2020, his 85th birthday.



CHAPTER 1: 1946 - 54

This saga starts when Fridrik Ólafsson participated in his first chess tournament at the age of 11, when some thought he was far too young. At the end of this first chapter he is still a junior player, at 19, and has already won nice games against several Grandmasters and International masters.

The four youngest players in the Amsterdam Chess Olympiad 1954. From the left Ingi R. Jóhannsson, Iceland (17), Fridrik Ólafsson, Iceland, Oscar Panno, Argentina and Bent Larsen, Denmark (all 19).

Photo: skaksogufelagid.is

FROM CHILDHOOD TO NORDIC CHAMPION

Fridrik Ólafsson was born in Reykjavik on the 26th of January 1935. By his own account he learned to play chess from his father at the age of eight. This was during the Second World War and in the year before the exciting moment when Iceland declared its republic, independent from Denmark on June 17th 1944.

At eleven Fridrik was allowed to take part in his first chess tournament, which was the 2nd and lowest class of the Icelandic Championship, in November 1946. There were protests against such a young boy being in a respected tournament. It might have been bad for his mental health if he lost all the games. According to the reports the players voted if he should be allowed to play. Fridrik started his first game pushing the pawn to e4, and when his opponent Hjalti Eliasson resigned, his position was only a ruin. To the surprise of many the young participant scored 4½ points in eight rounds and shared 6th place among 20 adult players.

A couple of months later, around his 12th birthday, Fridrik participated in the 2nd Class also in the Reykjavik Championship, and now he turned into

a clear winner with 9 points from 11 games. His climb to the top had begun well.

Later Fridrik was among the 20 participants when the world's first international junior tournament took place in Birmingham during the Easter of 1950. At 15 he was the youngest player, and travelled from Iceland to England on a fishing trawler. In the end he gained a remarkable 4th place in this tournament, which was also his first one abroad. At that time "abroad" was still a long way from Iceland.

One year later Fridrik was back in Birmingham for the first official World Junior Chess Championship. The competition was tougher this time, and for once he admittedly performed a bit below the expectations. But he won against Bent Larsen of Denmark, who was to be a natural rival for many decades to come.

In 1952 Fridrik tied for first in the Icelandic Championship, and won the playoff against Lárus Johnsen to become national champion, at 17. Later in the year the Chess Olympiad in Helsinki was his first opportunity to see

the big guys of the chess world, and also play against a few of them.

Due to the 50th anniversary of the Danish Chess Union, two major events took place in Denmark during the summer of 1953. First there was a very strong World Junior Championship in Copenhagen with Oscar Panno from Argentina as the new champion, when Fridrik tied for 3rd and got the 4th place on tie-break. Next was the Nordic Championship in Esbjerg, where Fridrik lost his first game, but then won six in a row and in the end was a quite clear Nordic Champion at 18.

In 1954 Fridrik confirmed all the way that this young player had already reached the level of an International master. Perhaps it did not matter so much to him that he received this title only two years later, in 1956.

But it was a pity that by one point's margin he missed his qualification from the big Zonal tournament in Czechoslovakia to the next year's Interzonal tournament in Gothenburg, which would have helped his early climbing towards the top. Fridrik came 6th when there were five qualifying spots.

A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CANDIDATE AT 23

CHAPTER 3:

1958 - 59

Fridrik Ólafsson became a world-famous player during the 1958 Interzonal tournament in beautiful Portorož on the Yugoslav coast. In the end he shared 5th place with even younger Bobby Fischer, and thus both went forward to the World Championship Candidates tournament. After 12 rounds in Portorož it also happened that Fridrik was awarded the Grandmaster title at the parallel FIDE congress. It was not too early.

Photo from the Candidates tournament book 1959.



The Portorož tournament confirmed a breakthrough for some of the chess world's shining new stars, with three of the six qualifiers for the Candidates tournament amongst them.

Record young Soviet Champion of the latest two years, Mikhail Tal (21) repeated a victory in this high class field, and was to continue all the way to dethrone world champion Botvinnik two years later. The youngest of them all, American sensation guy Bobby Fischer (15), was a bit behind in the run, and most critical after his loss to Fridrik in round 11. But through a strong finish he just made his qualification.

Fridrik Ólafsson (23) scored well against the strongest opponents, beating in the run favourites like Gligorić, Fischer, Larsen, Averbakh, and Szabo. But after some unfortunate losses, too, he was forced to win in the final round 21, and after a nervous game he seized his chance in the endgame against De Greiff of Colombia.

In the Swedish *Tidskrift för Schack* October 1958 the Yugoslav Dragoslav

Andric reported from the tournament under the headline "Fascinating final in Portorož":

"To state that the final round in Portorož was dramatic is a slight understatement. Never have the dance halls in the city been as empty as the evening before the 11th of September, and never has the beach been as empty as this morning. Five grandmasters held their breath during the adjourned game De Greiff – Ólafsson. Bronstein, Averbakh, Matanovic, Szabo and Pachman all had reasons to be curious, nervous, afraid, impatient... A draw in the game would change several things. But if anybody deserved a special prize for fighting spirit in the whole tournament, and if anybody could handle the crises under pressure, it was Ólafsson. Because of his sharp style he was often under pressure to let the grandmasters pay for his unexpected losses against international masters, and he managed that task. He became a true specialist on the grandmasters: 7 points against 4 in his favour is really impressive."

The other Nordic young star, Bent

Larsen (also 23), disappointed himself and his fans on this occasion and finished number 16, with 8½ points, when the last qualification places were Fischer and Ólafsson at 12 points.

Fridrik Ólafsson was awarded the Grandmaster title at the FIDE Congress held in Dubrovnik during the tournament. The Icelandic master Freysteinn Thórbergsson (1931-74) was Fridrik's second in Portorož and also attended the congress. He reported that in the meeting of 25th August only Fridrik became a new grandmaster.

The chess friends in Iceland had been waiting long for this announcement, since Fridrik had shown grandmaster strength from his victory in Hastings January 1956. In 1958 there were no such strict rules as today. Instead an expert committee within FIDE sent a proposal to the general assembly.

After the tournament Bobby Fischer was also awarded the Grandmaster title. At least advancing to the Candidates tournament automatically qualified for the title, so Fridrik made the title "double" in Portorož.

“WARMING UP” BEFORE THE INTERZONAL TOURNAMENT

I completed my preparation for the Interzonal Tournament in Portorož by participating in the Students' World Team Championship held in Varna, Bulgaria, shortly before the start of the Portorož tournament. Beyond doubt my participation in this championship proved useful to me, not only where chess was concerned, but also in the spheres of acclimatization and nutrition in these southern parts of Europe. I felt somewhat like “at home” when, after the tournament, I left for Yugoslavia. I feel sure that such acclimatization is important where tournaments are being held in places very different from what one is used to at home.

The Icelandic student team did not do as well as expected in this tournament reaching, however, second place in group B of the finals which must be considered an acceptable outcome. I scored inadequately in my first games, but as the tournament wore on I grew more successful and then I played, among others, this brisk game against the Dutchman, Roessel. I adopted a rather unusual development in this game which seemed to catch my opponent off guard.

□ **Fritz Roessel** – ■ **Friðrik Ólafsson**
Student Tourn., Varna, July 9 1958 (7)
King's Indian (A48)

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Bg5

This line is sometimes chosen to avoid the usual paths, but it is blunt and does not cause any difficulties for Black.

3...Bg7 4.Nbd2 c5 5.e3

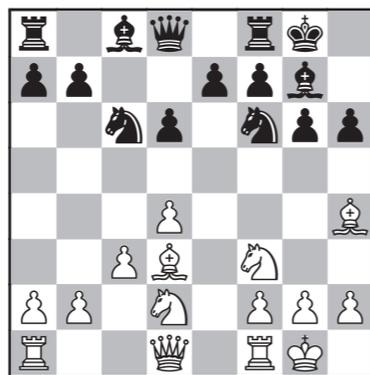
An interesting continuation is 5.Bxf6 Bxf6 6.Ne4 Bxd4 7.Nxd4 cxd4 8.Qxd4 0-0 9.0-0-0 Qa5 10.Kb1 Nc6 with about equal chances. In the tournament in Bled 1956, Dr. Trifunovic chose to play 5.c3 which is perhaps a more flexible line.

5...cxd4 6.exd4 0-0 7.c3

Filip played 7.Bd3 against me in the Olympiad at Varna 1962, with the following continuation: 7...Nc6 8.c3 d6 9.0-0 h6 10.Bxf6 Bxf6 11.d5! Ne5 12.Nxe5 dxe5! 13.Qb3 Bg7 14.Rad1 Kh7 15.Kh1 b6 16.Rfe1 Bb7 17.c4 f5 and Black got the upper hand.

7...Nc6 8.Bd3 d6 9.0-0 h6 10.Bh4?

The bishop lands itself in trouble after this move. 10.Bxf6 was better.



10...Nh5!

Now Black's intention is revealed. He wants to advance his king's side pawns, hemming in White's Bh4.

11.Re1 Qc7

Black wants to keep e5 under good protection before playing f5. He is also preparing to play e5 which White tries to prevent by his next move.

12.Nc4 f5 13.Ne3?

Here White makes a blunder and Black gets a decisive grip on the position. White should have made every effort to hinder e5 and create a retreat for the Bh4. In this respect the most plausible continuation was 13.d5 Ne5 14.Nfxe5 dxe5 15.f3 and White holds his ground, for example 15...Qc5+ 16.Bf2 Qxd5 17.Bf1 is in no way to Black's advantage because the pawn e5 cannot be defended. The best way to keep the initiative is by 15...g5 16.Bf2 Nf4 17.Bf1 Rd8 18.Ne3 e6 and due to the weakness on d5 Black has the upper hand.

13...e5

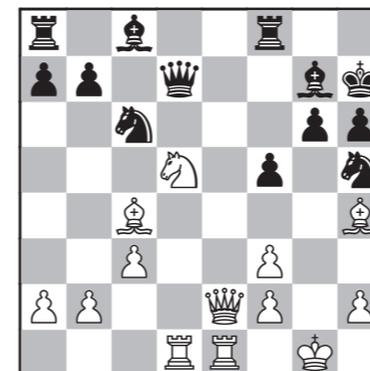
White probably expected 13...g5, but Black is clearly not going to take any unnecessary risks. After 14.Nxg5 hxg5 15.Qxh5 gxh4 16.Nxf5 Black's position would be anything but comfortable.

14.Bc4+ Kh7 15.Nd5 Qd7 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.Qe2

Realizing that the struggle is going against him, White decides to sacrifice a piece to create counter chances. He tries to take advantage of the uncomfortable position of Black's queen, but Black deals with this in a tactical manner. A good attempt nevertheless!

17...e4 18.Rad1?! exf3 19.gxf3

19.Qxf3 would be answered in the same way by 19...Qd6 or perhaps even better 19...Qf7. Black is quite ready to exchange his queen for the three minor pieces.



19...Qd6!

With this move Black beats back White's attack.

20.Nf6+ Rxf6 21.Rxd6 Rxd6 22.Rd1 Nf4

Black's very active pieces make life difficult for White. The weakness of White's pawns on the f-file causes his downfall.

23.Qc2 Rxd1+ 24.Qxd1 Ne5 25.Bd5 Nxd5 26.Qxd5 Bd7 0-1

White has no answer to 27...Bc6 etc.

FAVOURABLE FATES

In the Interzonal Tournament in Portorož I could not have chosen a better start, scoring a win against Szabo in the first round, draws against Pachman, Matanovic, and Filip in the next three followed by wins against Cardoso and Gligorić in the 5th and 6th rounds. The score against Gligorić, true enough, was marked by luck – having the inferior position and under heavy time pressure I laid a trap for him which he fell into – but in tournaments it is the wins that count, not how they are obtained. The position after 6 rounds was therefore promising – with 4,5 points, I shared 1st-2nd places – when I fell into a bad habit of losing to the “lesser prophets” in the tournament, perhaps through setting my sights too high.

My losses to Neikirch in the 7th and Rossetto in the 9th rounds had the consequence that I had to exert all my energy against “the stronger ones” in which I was successful beyond hope. In the 11th round I defeated the child prodigy, Bobby Fischer, and in rounds 13 and 14 Averbakh and Larsen met with the same fate. These successes in this part of the tournament put me on my feet again and I managed to steer my course to the end. True enough, I almost ruined everything by my loss against Sherwin in the next to last round, but the Fates smiled upon

RESULTS 1958-59

World Student Teams' Championship Varna 1958: *Friðrik* on board 1: 6½ points of 9. Iceland no. 10.

Interzonal tournament Portorož 1958: 1 M. Tal, URS 13½, 2 S. Gligorić, YUG 13, 3-4 T. Petrosian, URS & P. Benkö, USA 12½, 5-6 *Friðrik Ólafsson* & R. Fischer, USA 12, 7-11 D. Bronstein URS, J. Averbakh, URS, A. Matanovic, YUG, L. Szabo, HUN & L. Pachman, CZE 11½, 12-13 M. Filip, CZE & O. Panno, ARG 11, 14 R. Sanguinetti, ARG 10, 15 O. Neikirch, BUL 9½, 16 B. Larsen, DEN 8½, 17 J. Sherwin, USA 7½, 18 H. Rossetto, ARG 7, 19 R. Cardoso, PHI 6, 20 B. De Greiff, COL 4½, 21 G. Füster, CAN 2

Beverwijk tournament 1959:

1 *Friðrik Ólafsson* 7½, 2 E. Eliskases, ARG 5½, 3 J. Donner, NL 5, 4-7 T. van Scheltinga, NL, J. Barendregt, NL, A. O'Kelly, BEL & R. Toran, SPA 4½, 8 B. Larsen, DEN 4, 9 C. van den Berg, NL 3, 10 K. Langeweg, NL 2

Moscow Central Chess Club tournament 1959:

1-3 V. Smyslov, URS, D. Bronstein URS & B. Spassky, URS 7, 4-6 M. Filip, CZE, L. Portisch, HUN & E. Vasiukov, URS 6, 7-8 L. Aronin, URS & Z. Milev, BUL 5, 9-11 B. Larsen, DEN, *Friðrik Ólafsson* & V. Simagin, URS 4½, 12 A. Lutikov, URS 3½

Zürich tournament 1959: 1 M. Tal, URS 11½, 2 S. Gligorić, YUG 11, 3-4 P. Keres, URS & R. Fischer, USA 10½, 5-6 B. Larsen, DEN & W. Unzicker, FRG 9½, 7 G. Barcza, HUN 8½, 8 *Friðrik Ólafsson* 8, 9 J. Kupper, SUI 7 (16)

Candidates tournament Bled-Zagreb-Belgrade 1959:

1 M. Tal, URS 20, 2 P. Keres, URS 18½, 3 T. Petrosian, URS 15½, 4 V. Smyslov, URS 15, 5-6 S. Gligorić, YUG & R. Fischer, USA 12½, 7 *Friðrik Ólafsson* 10, 8 P. Benkö, FIDE 8

me, and my win against de Greiff in the final round “floated” me into the Candidates’ Tournament. This game was drawish at one time, but on its outcome depended whether I would “get in” or would have to compete for the 6th place along with 5 others. I did not like too much the idea of having to take part in a competition of that kind, and near the end of the game I managed to get the better of my opponent, whereupon the gleam of hope in ten expectant eyes was extinguished.

Here follows my game against Fischer which is one of the most eventful ones that I have ever played. The sacrifice of the exchange in the opening is more based on feeling than exact calculation; the evolution of the game, however, shows this to be fully justified. The many weak points created in the black position proved too much for Fischer, and he never managed to organize his defence. The end is interesting.

□ Friðrik Ólafsson –
■ Robert J. Fischer

Interzonal Tournament, Portorož
Aug 5 1958 (11)
Queen’s Gambit (D38)

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.d4 Bb4
The so called Ragozin Variation. White can now, if he wishes, develop the game along the lines of the Nimzo-Indian Defence by 5.e3, see my game against Sosonko at Wijk aan Zee 1976.

5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4
7.Bxf6 has always been considered a sounder move, see my game against Petrosian in the Candidates’

Tournament 1959. After 7.Bh4 Black can counterattack by 7...g5 8.Bg3 Ne4, the basic line of play in this variation. Fischer treats this differently.

7...c5 8.e3 Nc6

The game Petrosian versus Matanovic in the same tournament continued 8...0-0 9.dxc5 Nbd7 10.Be2 Qa5 11.0-0 Bxc3 12.bxc3 Qxc5 13.Rc1 and White’s position was freer after managing to play c3-c4.

9.Rc1

In recent years the continuation 9.dxc5 has come into vogue as can be seen, for example, in games this year (1976) from the Hastings and Wijk aan Zee tournaments. In the game Smejkal-Tal at Wijk aan Zee the continuation was as



Fridrik in the Portorož bulletin.

follows: 9...g5 10.Bg3 Ne4 11.Bb5 Nxc3 12.Bxc6+ bxc6 13.Qd4 Nxa2+ 14.Nd2 (Korchnoi in his game against Sosonko at Hastings played 14.Kd1 and now Black could safely have played 14...0-0 instead of 14...f6) 14...0-0 15.Rxa2 a5 16.h4 f6 17.0-0 Re8 and a draw was agreed, without pursuing the issue.

9...c4

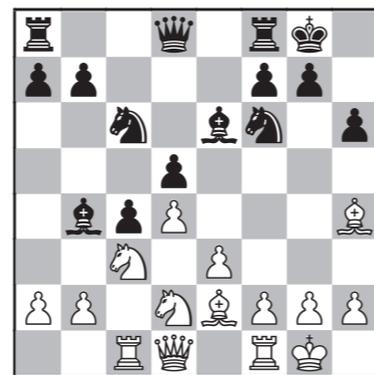
Fischer’s move is perhaps a little premature. Taimanov considers 9...g5 10.Bg3 Qa5 a better possibility with the continuation 11.Nd2 Be6 12.dxc5 d4 13.exd4 0-0-0. This position is from the game Blechzin-Ussow, Leningrad 1961, and Black’s active position makes up for the difference in material. Instead of 12.dxc5, 12.Bd3 comes strongly into consideration.

10.Be2

Probably 10.Nd2 is a slightly more precise move for now Fischer could have played 10...g5 11.Bg3 Ne4 trying to create pressure on the queen’s side.

10...Be6 11.0-0 0-0 12.Nd2

In order to get a better hold of e4 and prepare for the advance of the king’s side pawns.



12...Be7 13.b3!

White takes the bold decision to sacrifice the exchange in order to scatter Black’s pawns and induce him to weaken his king’s side. Clearly 13...cxb3 gives White a comfortable position so Fischer prefers to accept the sacrifice. It may also have occurred to him that this was simply an oversight on behalf of his opponent.

13...g5

In the tournament book it is maintained that 13...Ba3 would have been preferable which can hardly be the case and is poorly supported by the annotations given there. After for example 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Rb1 Black can only win the exchange at the cost of two pawns (15...Bf5 16.Nxd5 etc.) and 15...cxb3 16.Qxb3 Bb4 17.a3 gives White a lasting initiative. The same applies to 15...Bb4 16.Qc1 Bxc3 17.Qxc3 b5 18.bxc4 bxc4 19.Rb5 etc. Fischer, therefore, must play 13...g5 at once if he wants to gain the exchange.

14.Bg3 Ba3 15.Rc2

And not 15.Rb1 because of 15...Qa5 and White will have problems with his Nc3.

15...Nb4

Black has achieved his aim, and now it is White’s turn to show how he can justify his sacrifice of the exchange.

16.bxc4 Nxc2 17.Qxc2 dxc4

After this move White succeeds in weakening Black’s king’s side still further, and Fischer has either overlooked or underestimated this. A realistic evaluation of the position indicates that 17...Bd6 would have been a safer continuation, nevertheless



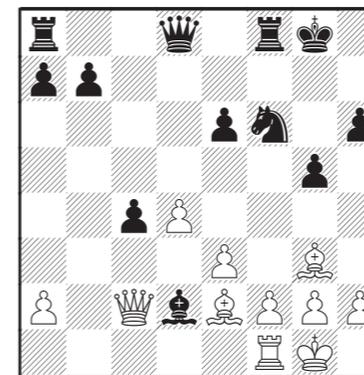
Home favourite Svetozar Gligorić vs Bobby Fischer in Portorož 1958, watched by tournament winner Mikhail Tal.

White has great attacking chances after 18.Bxd6 Qxd6 19.f4 etc.

18.Nb5 Bb4 19.Nc7 Bxd2 20.Nxe6

Of course not 20.Nxa8 because of 20...Ba5, nor was it ever White’s intention to go for the rook.

20...fxe6



21.Bxc4!

Fischer probably did not pay enough

attention to this move which sharply reveals his king’s side weaknesses. Now 21...Bb4 is not possible because of 22.Qg6+ Kh8 23.Qxh6+ Nh7 24.Be5+ Rf6 25.Bd3 and Black is lost.

(And even stronger was immediately 21.Qg6+! Kh8 22.Qxh6 Nh7 23.Be5+ Rf6 24.Bxc4 Qf8 25.Qh3. In the game now 21...Qe7! was a much better defence.)

21...Qe8 22.Qxd2 Ne4

The elimination of one of White’s bishops must at least be a comfort for Black. White has now only a pawn for the exchange; his strategically promising position more than compensates for this. The only reasonable solution to Black’s problems, as far as it can be of any avail, is to bring about the exchange of queens, and this is Black’s aim with the text.

23.Qd3 Nxc3 24.hxg3 Rf6

Black’s weak spot e6 is his greatest problem, and it is against this weakness



CHAPTER 10: 2000 –

In the 21st century Friðrik Ólafsson has played more chess than he did during the previous 15 or 20 years. Still it has been a question of when he was invited and encouraged to sit down at the board. One special event was the 2003 rapid match of eight games with Bent Larsen in Reykjavik: a friendly match, but naturally also prestigious.

The opening of the match with Bent Larsen in Reykjavik 2003, 47 years after their previous eight games fight for the Nordic Championship. Friðrik's first move is made by the sports journalist Bjarni Felixson, a friend of Friðrik since their childhood. At his side is the arbiter Einar S. Einarsson.

Photo: Ómar Óskarsson

AN HONORARY VETERAN STILL ATTACKING

In spite of his serious lack of practice and gradually some less energy for his once so famous fighting spirit, the old star Friðrik has still sometimes been able to show his brilliance on the chessboard, attacking the opponent's king when given an opportunity. And around him the Icelanders have fortunately continued to impress the world with both strong players and not less skilled organizers, with the necessary support from the authorities and some sponsors.

Friðrik's first participation in the 21st century took place in some attractive events close to his home in Reykjavik. The first was a rapid tournament in Kópavogur, just outside Reykjavik, when six Icelandic grandmasters including Friðrik challenged the famous foreign stars Kasparov, Anand, Korchnoi, Timman, Sokolov and Wojtkiewicz. From each of two groups two players qualified for the semifinals. Friðrik Ólafsson got some tough rapid games against these gentlemen, but we will show you how he also punished Victor Korchnoi, who overestimated his position.

The next two occasions were the memorial tournaments in Reykjavik 2001 for Jóhann Thórir Jónsson, an important personality in Icelandic chess, and

in 2002 for Dan Hansson, the chess player from Sweden who moved to Iceland in 1980. In both these events the list of participants is quite impressive reading.

Then a rapid match was staged in November 2003 in Reykjavik, against the old arch-rival Bent Larsen. Larsen had remained active in tournament chess up to then, mostly in Argentina where he lived since the early 1980s, but due to his diabetes he was rarely able to show his very best any more.

On January 26th 2005 Friðrik turned 70, and retired from his job at the Parliament, the famous Althingi in Reykjavik. The Icelandic chess magazine *Skák* made a special edition on Friðrik at seventy, with some extracts from his 1976 book, and with greetings from a few of his chess friends, partly quoted in our present book.

The level of chess activity did not change much after Friðrik had also retired from his job. He still accepted some invitations when good arguments were added. Old friends in the Netherlands was one such argument, and amongst them Max Euwe although he had died in 1981. Friðrik participated in an "Euwe Stimulans" tournament in

Arnhem 2007 and the "Max Euwe Memorial" in Amsterdam 2011.

Friðrik also accepted invitations to take part in another two match tournaments between Women and Veteran players, which were both staged in the Czech Republic. In these events he got the opportunity to meet and play in a team together with old chess friends, colleagues and rivals.

Another attraction was the Nordic Senior Championship in Reykjavik 2011, a tournament which gathered strong elder players from all the Nordic countries. Friðrik participated also in the next of these championships in Denmark 2013, and meanwhile in a Memorial tournament for his friend Bent Larsen, who died in 2010.

All the way Friðrik remains not least the natural symbol of chess in Iceland. In 2008 the Icelandic post issued a stamp commemorating the 50th anniversary of Iceland's first grandmaster title in 1958, with Friðrik's final position in his game with Fischer from 1958 as the stamp motif. On the 26th of January 2012 this date – Friðrik's birthday – was inaugurated as the annual "Chess Day" in Iceland, and in 2015 Friðrik was declared Honorary Citizen of Reykjavik.

A WELCOME REVENGE AGAINST KORCHNOI

Before another strong edition of Reykjavik Open 2000, a fascinating rapid tournament was staged in Iceland's second largest town Kópavogur, which is very close to Reykjavik. The two groups of strong players were won by Kasparov and Anand respectively. Fridrik Ólafsson was again lured into play, and won a game which was probably particularly welcome.

Against the tremendous fighter Victor Korchnoi (1931-2016) Fridrik had a bad score with four losses in five black games many years ago. With the white pieces Fridrik had played only two games against him. These were a draw from Hastings 1955-56 and Fridrik's win in the IBM tournament in Amsterdam 1976, a few games before Korchnoi defected to the west. In that game Korchnoi was much better, and the position was probably a draw when Victor lost on time. Fridrik also had bad memories from the "Korchnoi case" during his FIDE presidency.

In this rapid game Fridrik handles the black pieces once again, and we believe it when the reports tell that the spectators watched this duel with extra attention and growing enthusiasm. Towards the end the players were probably very short of time, and the last moves are rather chaotic. The time control was 25 minutes per player for the whole game, without increment.

□ **Victor Korchnoi** –

■ **Friðrik Ólafsson**

Kópavogur Rapid (6), 1 April 2000
Queen's Indian (E12)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.Nc3 Bb7 5.Bg5 Be7 6.e3 Ne4!

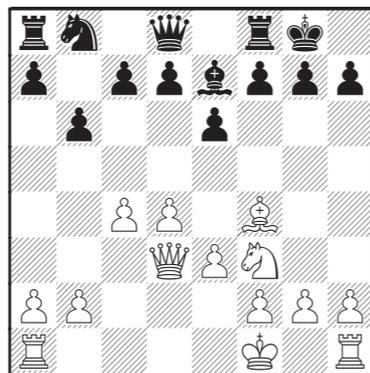
"Black's best line is the standard equa-

lizing manoeuvre 6...Ne4!", according to the book "The Queen's Indian" by Yrjölä and Tella (Gambit 2003).

7.Nxe4 Bxe4 8.Bf4!?

This is an ambitious side-line which Korchnoi knew from the 1960s. The equal play is 8.Bxe7 Qxe7.

8...0-0 9.Bd3 Bb4+ 10.Kf1! Bxd3+ 11.Qxd3 Be7

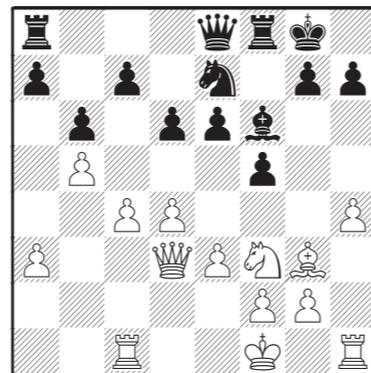


12.h4(!)

This is White's point, an idea from the game Spassky – Polugaevsky in the USSR Championship 1961, which continued 12...f5?! 13.Ke2 d6 14.g4 Nd7 15.Rag1 with better play for White, and later a clear winning position, although Spassky later lost the game. In Bucuresti 1966 Korchnoi played

something similar against G. Garcia: 12.Rc1 d6 13.h4 Nd7 14.g4!? f6 15.h5 Qe8 16.Nh4 and later won.

12...Nc6! 13.Rc1 f5 14.a3 Bf6 15.b4 d6 16.Bg3 Qe8 17.b5 Ne7



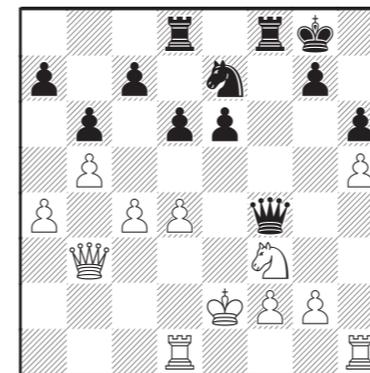
18.Ke2?!

Here it is no great idea to walk out with the king. He ought to be more careful with 18.Kg1 or 18.a4, but Korchnoi certainly wants to "kill" his opponent. Now Black's best is probably to open the a-file with 18..a6!

18...Rd8 19.Qb3 Qf7

Or 19...c5! 20.bxc6 Nxc6 with slightly better chances for Black.

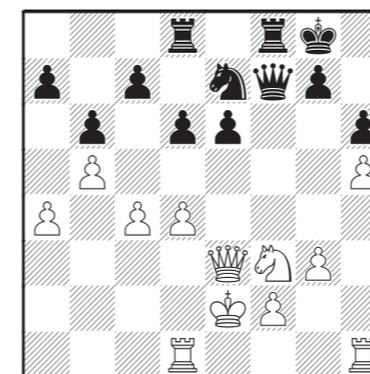
20.h5 h6 21.a4 Bg5 22.Rcd1 f4! 23.exf4 Bxf4 24.Bxf4 Qxf4



25.g3?

A serious weakening of the position. White could hope for even play with 25.Rh4! Qf7 26.Kf1. (At a website we found this rapid game with here the move 25.g4?. This makes Fridrik's response 25...Qf7 less understandable, but we cannot say for sure which of the two moves was played.)

25...Qf7 26.Qe3



26...e5! 27.Rc1(?)

It was too late to keep the position closed with 27.d5 Nf5 28.Qe4 Nd4+. White's only hope was to give a pawn or



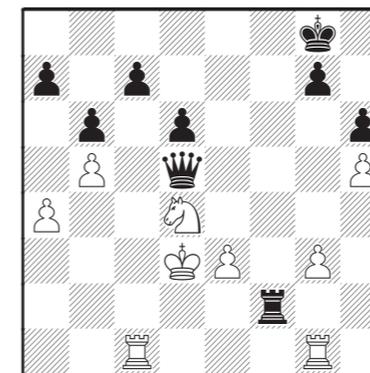
two with 27.dxe5 Qxc4+ 28.Qd3 Qxa4 29.Rh4 Qa2+ 30.Rd2 Qf7.

27...exd4 28.Nxd4 Rde8! 29.Kd2(?)

After all 29.Kf1 was better, but it's a completely lost position.

29...Nd5 30.cxd5 Rxe3 31.fxe3 Qxd5 32.Rhg1 Rf2+ 33.Kd3 0-1

Korchnoi either lost on time or resigned before Fridrik could play 33...Qa2 or Qxh5 ending all resistance.



Victor Korchnoi (73) playing against Magnus Carlsen (14) during the Drammen tournament in Norway 2004. Earlier that year Magnus had made headlines when he drew vs Kasparov, and nearly beat him, in a rapid game in Reykjavik.

Photo: Øystein Brekke

Just after this Hannes Stéfansson – who was literally born during the Fischer-Spassky match in Reykjavik(!), on July 18th 1972 – gained an impressive home victory in the 2000 edition of the Reykjavik Open, one full point ahead of the seven well-known players Short, Korchnoi(!), Grishchuk, Wojtkiewicz, Miles, Bu Xiangzhi and Ehlvest.

THE JÓHANN THÓRIR JÓNSSON MEMORIAL

Although Fridrik was of course not really prepared for a strong international competition, he participated in the memorial tournament for his good friend and Icelandic chess profile Jóhann Thórir Jónsson (1941-99). This tournament gathered 42 strong players in the Reykjavik Town Hall from October 23rd to November 1st of 2001.

For several decades Jóhann Thórir Jónsson was a well-known editor of the Icelandic chess magazine *Skák*, and also editor of some big bulletin projects such as for the World Championship Match 1972 and the Luzern Chess Olympiad 1982. He also started – in his role as chairman from 1961 of Fridrik’s

club Taflfelag Reykjavíkur – the valuable tradition of biannual international Reykjavik tournaments from 1964. In an article in the printed program of the World Cup Tournament in Reykjavik 1988 Jóhann Thórir describes how these tournaments came about at a time when the club had nearly no activity, and when there were also no similar plans in the federation.

Bosnian and Danish grandmasters Ivan Sokolov and Peter Heine Nielsen shared first place in the memorial tournament, both with 7½ points in ten rounds. Hannes Hlifar Stéfansson provided a good Icelandic result sharing third place with Jan Timman. A shared 9th place was an acceptable performance from Fridrik, who did not meet most of the strongest participants.

Fridrik won an aggressive game against a Czech woman grandmaster who later represented Iceland from 2004 onwards. Lenka Ptacnikova (born 1976) played five Olympiads for the Czech Republic from 1994 to 2002 and six Olympiads for Iceland from 2004 to 2014.

□ **Friðrik Ólafsson** – ■ **Lenka Ptacnikova**
J.T. Jonsson Memorial Reykjavik (3), 25 Oct 2001, English Opening (A01)

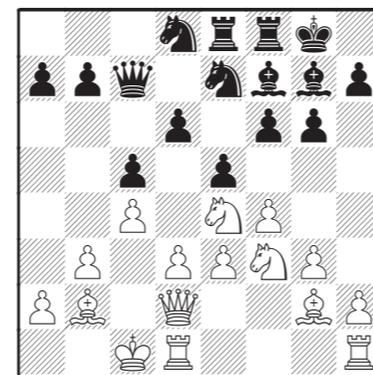
1.c4 e5 2.g3 Nc6 3.Bg2 g6 4.b3 Bg7 5.Bb2 d6 6.Nc3 Nge7 7.d3 0-0 8.Qd2 Be6 9.Nd5 Qd7 10.f4

Fridrik had seen this position once before, in Reykjavik 1968 against another English Opening specialist, Mark Taimanov, who played 10...a5, and made a draw.

10...Rae8 11.0-0-0!?

Hardly absolutely correct, but starting complications for an attacking game. The engines claim that 11...a5! would have been a strong reply for Black.

11...Nd8 12.Nc3 c5 13.Nf3 f6 14.e3 Bf7 15.Ne4! Qc7



16.g4

It was preferable to prepare the attack with 16.Kb1, or to close the centre with 16.fxe5! dxe5 and then 17.g4!

16...d5! 17.cxd5 Bxd5 18.g5

Still 18.fxe5 was stronger.

18...Bxe4

Black might equalize also with 18...

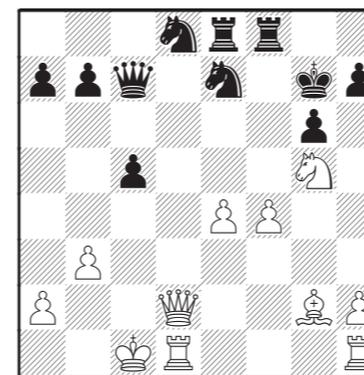


Lenka Ptacnikova playing for Iceland in the Dresden Chess Olympiad 2008.

fxg5! 19.fxg5 c4! 20.Qc3 Nf5 21.bxc4 Nxe3 etc.

19.dxe4 exf4 20.exf4 fxg5 21.Bxg7 Kxg7 22.Nxg5

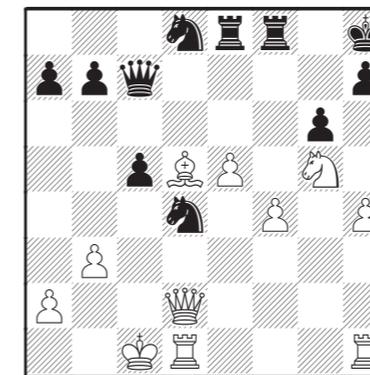
The last critical moment of this game:



22...Kg8?

The losing move in a demanding position. Black could claim an even game with 22...Nec6! 23.Qc3+ Kg8 24.Rhf1 Rxf4 25.Qc4+ Kh8, or possibly 22...h6.

23.e5! Nec6 24.Bd5+ Kh8 25.h4 Nd4



26.h5!

When the centre is closed, Black cannot defend against this opening of the h-file. The rest is simple.

26...gxh5 27.Rxh5 Re7 28.Rdh1 Rxf4 29.Rxh7+ Rxh7 30.Rxh7+ Qxh7 31.Nxh7 Kxh7 32.Bc4 Rf3 33.Qg5 Nf7 34.Qe7 Kg6 35.Qxc5 Nc6 36.e6 Nfe5 37.e7 Nxe7 38.Qxe5 1-0

RESULTS 2000 – 2016:

Kópavogur Rapid 2000:

Group 1: G. Kasparov 4½, M. Pétursson 3, J. Timman & H. Ólafsson 2½, Fridrik Ólafsson 1½, V. Korchnoi 1

Group 2: V. Anand 4, A. Wojtkiewicz 3½, I. Sokolov 3, H. Stéfansson 2½, J. Hjartarson 1½, J. Árnason ½

Semi-finals: Anand – Pétursson 1½-½, Kasparov – Wojtkiewicz 1½-½.

Final: Kasparov – Anand 3-1

Johann Thórir Jónsson Memorial tournament Reykjavik 2001:

1-2 I. Sokolov, BIH & P.H. Nielsen, DEN 7½ /10, 3-4 H.L. Stéfansson, ISL & J. Timman, NL 7, 5-8 J. Ehlvest, EST, L. Schandorff, DEN, H. Ólafsson, ISL & M. Chandler, ENG 6½, 9-10 Fridrik Ólafsson & S. Kristjánsson, ISL 6 (42 players)

Dan Hansson Memorial Rapid Reykjavik 2002:

Final: Tomas Oral, CZE – Jan Votava, CZE 2-0.

1st round: Fridrik Ólafsson – Sævar Bjarnason 1-1, 2-1.

2nd round: Fridrik Ólafsson – Jaan Ehlvest 1-1, ½-1½

Greenland Open Rapid Qaqortoq 2003:

1 L. Mc Shane, ENG 8½, 2 J. Hjartarson, ISL 7½, 3 P. Nikolic, BIH 7 ... 26 Fridrik Ólafsson 4½ (51)

Friendly Rapid match Reykjavik 2003:

Fridrik Ólafsson – Bent Larsen 5-3 (+2 =6)

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