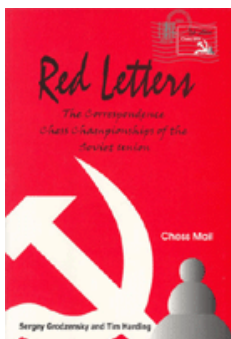




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Tim Harding



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The Career and Legacy of Bob Wade

I would not be writing this column were it not for the late Bob Wade. Robert G. Wade OBE, FIDE international master and twice British Champion, was born in Dunedin, New Zealand on 10 April 1921 and died on 29 November 2008 in London. I regret that I was unable to attend Bob's funeral. The photograph below shows Bob Wade in my study around the time of the Dublin Telecom tournament of 1991. This was one of the last times I met him.

In 1964, when I first met him, he was one of only five active international masters in Britain (and no grandmasters) and he was the only one who tried to make a living from playing chess. Three of the other IMs – Jonathan Penrose, Cenek Kottnauer, and C. H. O'D. Alexander – all had 'normal' jobs. Harry Golombek earned his crust as a chess author and journalist which arguably made him a sort of professional but he was not reliant on prize money and fees for playing engagements. (Sir George Thomas was also an I.M., but he was never a professional and by this time was retired from playing.)

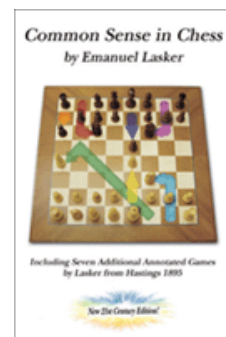


Bob Wade

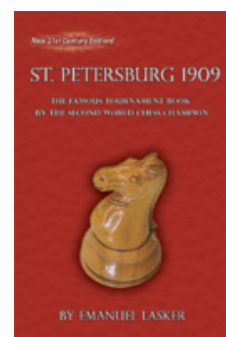
Bob made a huge contribution to British chess, especially from the mid-1960s onwards, popularising chess through evening classes and lectures, coaching of the masters of the future, and not least through his involvement in chess publishing from the mid-1960s. I have read the tributes to him online, but most of them do not really cover the full range of what Bob did. He was equally at home encouraging new young players at what used to be annual new year exhibitions at Earls Court, running chess classes at the workers' educational establishment Morley College in Lambeth, giving private coaching to Greek millionaires (probably an important source at times of part of what was never a comfortable income), or lecturing to the university chess clubs of Oxford and Cambridge where he did valuable talent-spotting as well as opening the eyes and ears of listeners to what chess at a high level was all about. In the early 1970s years of the Fischer boom, he even devised a chess series for beginners that was screened on independent television.

Serious analytical work on chess openings in England began in 1968 with *Chessman Quarterly*, a magazine that Bob devised and edited with correspondence master Frank Boyd. This is where the first articles

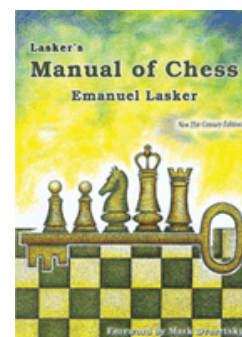
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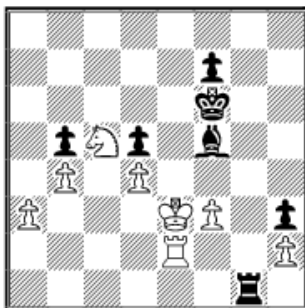
appeared by most of the early authors in the Batsford openings book series that followed. It showed there was a market for quality chess literature in English, and the series depended to a great extent in its early years on a group of young masters and experts who started with the *Quarterly* and applied to chess research the techniques they had learned doing their Oxbridge degrees. Credit is due to Peter Kemmis Betty of Batsford who 'bought' the idea of a chess list and backed it through the good years before the company fell into bad management.

Many of these Batsford writers whom Bob mentored also became successful players at a high level for a few years, notably Keene, Hartston, and Botterill. There had never been anything like this in English before (except some translations from the Dutch/German *Chess Archives*, which had a different format). Bob Wade also helped Bobby Fischer prepare for his 1971 Candidates matches and especially the Spassky match by compiling a huge secret dossier of his opponent's games.

He had earned Fischer's respect with a 69-move draw with black in one of their three encounters: at the 1965 Capablanca Memorial where Fischer was playing remotely from New York. This was no fluke. Despite giving up a pawn at move eight (it was a Spanish Marshall), Bob maintained sufficient compensation throughout a long endgame, although a slip at move forty made the draw much harder to achieve. (This game was also featured in a ChessCafe.com [Video Spotlight](#) segment.)

Bobby Fischer – Bob Wade

Capablanca Memorial, Havana 1965



This is a critical moment as White is going to create a passed pawn.

52 a4 bxa4 53 Nxa4 Rd1! 54 Rb2 Rd3+ 55 Kf2 Rxd4 56 Nc3 Rd3 57 Ne2 d4

The sealed move at the end of the second session of play.

58 b5 Bc8 59 Nc1 Rd1 60 Nb3 Rh1 61 Kg3 Rg1+ 62 Kf4 Rg2 63 Rd2 Bb7 64 b6 Ba8! 65 Rxd4 Rxh2 66 Rd6+ Ke7 67 Rh6 Rb2 68 Nd4 h2 69 Kg3 1/2-1/2

Bob was also a committed club chess player and indeed his very last game was played only a few weeks before his death, for Athenaeum chess club. When I moved to London in 1972, I was soon recruited for the club's London league team and after my first season I was persuaded to become team captain for the centenary season 1973-4. Bob stressed from the start that it was very important to him that we should win all the available trophies: the Middlesex league, the London League, and the National Club Championship. The first was not difficult and did not require turning out the strongest team. To win the London League, with eleven matches over twelve boards through the winter, was partly an exercise in man management, helped by the fact that Athenaeum was one of the three central clubs that never had to play away – except when he had to meet one of the other two, Metropolitan or London University. I generally played about board six, partly because of the distractions of captaincy. After Bob on top board, our team included two former British junior champions, Ron Harris and Keith Richardson (then busy winning

the bronze medal in the seventh correspondence world championship) and another Batsford author, Les Blackstock, and usually Kevin O'Connell, as well as some unsung heroes such as a busy barrister who could be relied on for points around board nine.

The toughest task was to win the six-board National Club Championship, which for several years had been dominated by Cambridge University, who had two teams. This was a six-board event, for which Athenaeum was strengthened by including Robert Bellin on board two. First we had to beat London Central YMCA, a new club with some strong players, and in another round we had to travel to Nottingham to defeat a Sheffield club. In the semi-final we faced the Cambridge undergraduates, whom we managed to beat, so that in the final we had to play their senior team which in theory would be led by Ray Keene and Bill Hartston, but fortunately Ray was away at a tournament somewhere. We were not at full strength either. I don't remember much about the tense final match, played at a neutral venue in London, except that I drew with John Sugden on board five. The match ended 3-3 with our board six losing, but we won on a higher board, thanks to either Bellin or Richardson, and so (on the elimination-of-bottom-board rule) we achieved the clean sweep for Bob. I think that motivation was what carried us through.

Bob's early career

Bob's achievements in chess were all the more remarkable because he grew up in wartime in one of the world's most remote countries which had very little chess tradition, namely New Zealand. At that time he played his only correspondence tournament, from which this quite well-known miniature survives.

Bob Wade - E. W. Bennett

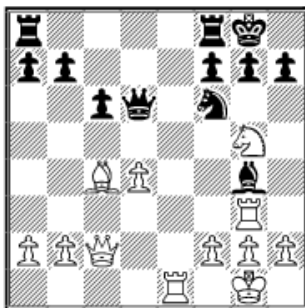
New Zealand correspondence, 19422

Queen's Gambit [D68]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 e3 Be7 6 Nf3 0-0 7 Rc1 c6 8 Bd3 dxc4 9 Bxc4 Nd5 10 Bxe7 Qxe7 11 0-0 Nxc3 12 Rxc3 e5 13 Qc2 exd4 14 exd4 Nf6 15 Re1 Qd6 16 Ng5 Bg4

16...Qf4 was played in Levenfish-Riumin, Moscow 1935, while 16...h6 17 Nxf7 Rxf7 18 Qg6 occurred in Alekhine-H. Carlsson, Orebro 1935.

17 Rg3



17...Bh5

After the game was published, 17...Qxd4 received attention. Not then 18 Nxf7 Nxf7 19 Re4 (Korn) because of 19...Bf5 (H.H. Cole), but 18 Re7! Bh5 (J.J. O'Hanlon suggested avoiding the worst by 18...Rad8.) 19 Ne6 Qd6 (or 19...fxc6 20 Rgxg7+ Kh8 21 Rxh7+) 20 Nxg7 Bg6 21 Nf5 Qf4 22 Rxb7 with advantage (C.H. Reid, in *Chess*, September 1943).

18 Rh3 Bg6?

If 18...h6 19 Rxh5 hxg5 20 Rxg5 Rfe8 White wins by 21 Bxf7+. Black ought to play 18...Qb4! as seen later in Boleslavsky-Moiseev, Odessa

1949.

19 Qxg6 1-0

Black resigned because of 19...hxg6 20 Bxf7+ Rxf7 21 Rh8+ Kxh8 22 Nxf7+ Kg8 23 Nxd6 Rd8 24 Re6 with a clear extra pawn and winning endgame. Bob pointed out that the entire game was known from analysis by Kopaev and Chistyakov dating back to 1938. So from an early stage in his career he was looking to Soviet chess (on which he later wrote a book) for exemplars of best practice in chess theory.

After the war, Bob made some extended trips to the northern hemisphere in search of chess-playing opportunities and soon improved his standard by meeting masters on a regular basis which was impossible at home. At the Oldenburg 1949 tournament, one of those in which several ‘displaced persons’ competed, he won a game against Estonian-born Ortvin Sarapu. This led to him persuading Sarapu to choose New Zealand instead of Australia as his place of resettlement (later becoming an IM) so it could be said that Bob organised his own replacement. After earning the IM title in 1950, Bob permanently settled in England.

At least in his youth, Bob also looked towards Moscow for his political views. To what extent he modified them later I am not sure, but in 1979 he did not refuse the well-earned OBE for services to chess from Queen Elizabeth. Around 1950, when the first FIDE titles were being awarded, there was much argument about who should get what on the basis of pre-war achievements. Bob strongly opposed the award of a title to Fedor Bohatirchuk who had been involved as a non-combatant (he was a radiologist) in Vlassov’s renegade regiment on the Nazi side in the war, and who was (by now living in Canada) responsible for anti-communist propaganda. You can read some of the correspondence about this in chess magazines of the time.

In his time, Bob caused a few upsets to well-known players. Grandmasters that he defeated in tournament play included Alexander Tolush, Viktor Korchnoi, and Lajos Portisch. Some of these successes came in the endgame, perhaps his favourite phase.

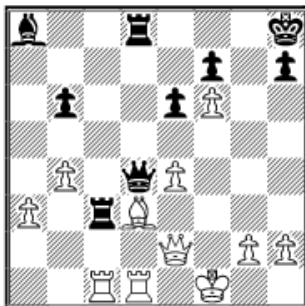
I think the ChessBase notes to the Tolush finish are misleading and unfair to Bob who was not losing as they suggest.

Bob Wade – Alexander Tolush

Hastings 1953-44

Nimzo-Indian Defence [E38]

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 Na6 6 Nf3 Nxc5 7 Bd2 b6 8 Nb5 Bxd2+ 9 Nxd2 d5 10 b4 Na6 11 e4 0-0 12 a3 Bb7 13 Bd3 Rc8 14 0-0 dxc4 15 Nxc4 Qd7 16 Ne5 Qe7 17 Qe2 Ba8 18 Nxa7 Qxa7 19 Bxa6 Rc3 20 Bd3 Qc7 21 f4 Rd8 22 Rfd1 g5 23 fxg5 Qxe5 24 gxf6 Kh8 25 Rac1 Qd4+ 26 Kf1



26...Rxa3

My version of the ChessBase database gives this move a question mark and says Tolush missed a win 26...Qxf6+ 27 Ke1 Rxd3. However, Bob

would instead have played 27 Qf2! Qxf2+ 28 Kxf2 when 28...Rcxd3? fails to 29 Rxd3 Rxd3 30 Rc8+ Kg7 31 Rxa8, so instead play would continue 28...Rxa3 29 Be2 Bxe4 30 Rd6 or 29 Bb1. Admittedly, Black has a slight endgame edge, but Bob could probably defend this.

Also White should hold after 26...Rxc1 27 Rxc1 Qxf6+ 28 Qf3.

27 e5 Rg8??

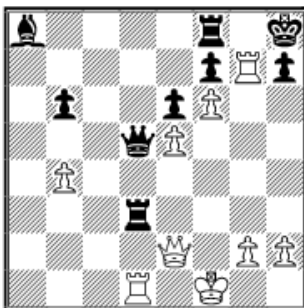
This is a disastrous mistake. Bob was a tactical opportunist in the middlegame and now he takes his chance.

Here 27...Qf4+ 28 Kg1 Qd4+ is given as a drawing line by ChessBase, but this is not clear at all:

a) White should not risk 29 Kh1!? because although Black cannot capture on d3, he has 29...Rg8 when there are some unclear tactical possibilities, e. g. 30 Bb5 (30 Bg6? Qf4 31 Rc4 Re3) 30...Rc3 (30...Qxb4 31 Bc6 probably leads to exchanges and a drawn rook endgame; not 30...Bxg2 +?? 31 Qxg2 Rc3 32 Rxd4 Rxc1+ 33 Bf1) 31 Rxc3 Qxc3 32 Rg1 when White is uncomfortable.

b) 29 Qf2! Qxe5 when ChessBase says equal, but White may still have an edge. He can play 30 Be4! Rg8 31 Bxa8 Rgxa8 32 Qd4 or 32 Qxb6 Qxf6 33 Rf1.

28 Rc4 Qd5 29 Rg4 Rf8 30 Rg7 Rxd3



31 Rxh7+ 1-0

White mates in three.

In the 1950s and 1960s Bob was virtually the only western chess master willing to travel behind the 'iron curtain' to play in tournaments or act as paid arbiter. In 1963 and 1964 he went to Castro's Cuba to compete in the early Capablanca Memorials, and he also played in the much stronger 1965 event. It was on these visits that he met the Argentinian-born revolutionary Che Guevara, with whom he contested numerous blitz games. He recalled to me that on one occasion, after returning to Heathrow Airport, he was taken aside by Special Branch or secret service types eager to quiz him about Guevara.

In 1960 he beat Korchnoi at Buenos Aires 1960, probably his greatest 'scalp', although he was somewhat lucky to score the extra half point.

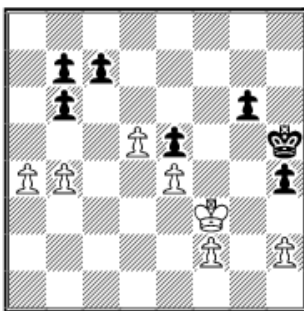
Bob Wade – Victor Korchnoi

Buenos Aires 1960

Queen's Gambit Accepted [D07]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nc3 Nc6 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 e4 Bg4 6 d5 Ne5 7 Bxc4 Nxc4
8 Qa4+ Nd7 9 Qxc4 e5 10 Bg5 f6 11 Be3 Bxf3 12 gxf3 Bd6 13 Nb5
Nb6 14 Bxb6 axb6 15 Rc1 0-0 16 Rg1 Rf7 17 Nxd6 Qxd6 18 Ke2 Rd8
19 Rgd1 Rdd7 20 Rd3 f5 21 Ra3 fxe4 22 fxe4 Rf8 23 Rcc3 Rdf7 24
Rf3 h5 25 Rxh7 Rxf7 26 Rf3 Rxf3 27 Kxf3 Kh7 28 Ke2 h4 29 Qc3 Qe7

30 Qf3 g6 31 Qg4 Kg7 32 Qe6 Qf6 33 Qxf6+ Kxf6 34 Kf3 Kg5 35 a4
Kh5 36 b4



36...Kg5??

Korchnoi missed the saving line 36...b5! 37 axb5 b6=.

37 b5 Kh5

Now if 37...Kf6 38 Kg4 g5 39 Kh5 and wins.

38 a5! 1-0

Black resigned in view of 38...bxa5 39 b6 cxb6 40 d6 etc.

Probably Bob's most famous and brilliant win was against Uhlmann in the French Defence. It was really worth two points because when they next met, at Hastings 1970-1, the East German grandmaster was still in shell-shock and Bob beat him again, although he had a bad position after about twenty moves.

Bob Wade – Wolfgang Uhlmann

Skopje 1968

French Defence [C05]

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 f4 c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ndf3 cxd4 8
cxd4 h5 9 a3 Nb6 10 Bd3 Bd7 11 Ne2 a5 12 0-0 a4 13 Qe1 Na5?



A textbook attack follows, starting with a double pawn sacrifice to open up holes around the black king and take advantage of the black knight having gone AWOL. Notes to this game can be found at the ChessBase obituary page cited below.

14 f5! exf5 15 e6! fxe6 16 Qg3 Kf7 17 Nf4 Kg8 18 Ng6 Nb3 19 Nxh8
Nxc1

If 19...Nxa1 20 Ne5 and the black knight is out of play again.

20 Raxc1 Kxh8 21 Ne5 Be8 22 Rc7 h4 23 Qf4 g5?

A slip in a bad position, leading to a final sacrificial breakthrough.

24 Ng6+ Kg8 25 Qe5 Bxg6 26 Qxe6+ Kh8 27 Rxb7 Qe8 28 Rxb6 Bg7

29 Qxg6 Qe3+ 30 Kh1 Qxd3 31 Qh5+ Kg8 32 Rd1 Qc2 33 Rb7 Rf8 34 Rxc7+ Kxc7 35 Qxg5+ Kh7 36 Rc1 Re8 37 h3 1-0

Bob won the British Championship twice. The first time was in 1952 at Chester. He might have won it more often but for the dominance of Penrose in the 1960s and the fact that he was sometimes abroad when the event was being played, e.g. in 1964 when Haygarth was the surprise winner. That was when I managed to draw with Bob in a simultaneous he gave for juniors on the afternoon after our first round. Shortly afterwards he left for Havana.

Bob's second title was won at the University of Warwick campus at Coventry in 1970, when he and George Botterill stayed in my house in Oxford and drove up each day in George's car. This was unexpected as the younger generation of players he had fostered were very much coming to form at that time, but it seems that the regime of not staying on-campus not only saved him money but also allowed him to concentrate on his games rather than being distracted.

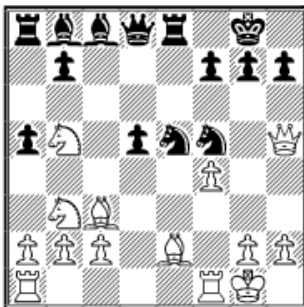
Jonathan Penrose – Bob Wade

British Championship, Coventry 1970
French Defence [C09]

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 c5 4 Ngf3 Nc6 5 exd5 exd5 6 Bb5 Bd6 7 0-0 cxd4 8 Nb3 Nge7 9 Nfxd4 0-0 10 Qh5 Ne5 11 Be2

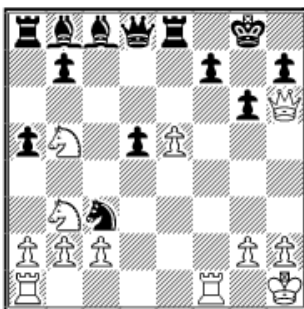
Penrose repeated this novelty two years later against Simon Webb so he must have found an improvement somewhere in the next few moves. The position after Black's tenth move was known from Aronin-Portisch, Alekhine Memorial 1959.

11...Re8 12 Bd2 a5 13 Nb5 Bb8 14 Bc3?! Nf5 15 f4?!



With his last two moves Penrose is trying to convert his slight positional advantage from the opening into a sacrificial kingside attack, but Wade proves it to be unsound.

15...g6 16 Qh3 Nd4 17 Qh6 Nxe2+ 18 Kh1 Nxc3 19 fxe5



19...Bxe5

Rather than eat all the material on offer and have his king driven into the middle of the board by 19...Nxb5 20 Rxf7, which might be survivable but

very dangerous in practice, Wade opts for the pragmatic course of consolidation.

20 bxc3 Ra6 21 N3d4 Bg7 22 Qd2 Bd7 23 a4 Rf6

Black has an extra pawn without any risk.

24 Rfe1 Re4 25 Rad1 Bxb5 26 axb5 Rff4 27 Rxe4 Rxe4 28 Nb3 b6 29 h3 a4 30 Nd4 Bxd4 31 cxd4 Qc7 32 Qd3 Qe7 33 c4 Re3 34 Qc2 dxc4 35 Qxc4 a3 36 d5 Re1+ 37 Rxe1 Qxe1+ 38 Kh2 Qd2 39 Qc8+ Kg7 40 Qa8 a2 0-1

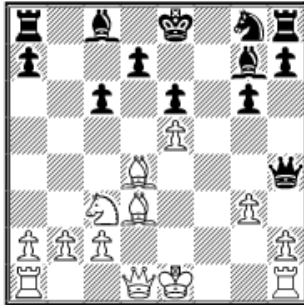
Teesside 1972 was probably one of the last times Bob played in an event with many leading players and he defeated two Hungarian grandmasters. The two games were very different. Bilek (who outranked him by 120 Elo points) unwisely chose an inferior semi-accelerated Dragon and Bob knew just how to refute it.

Bob Wade – Istvan Bilek

Teesside 19722

Sicilian Defence [B34]

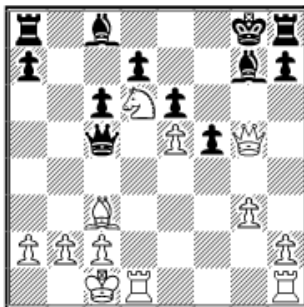
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6?! 6 Be3 Bg7 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 e5 Ng8 9 Bd4 f6 10 f4 fxe5 11 fxe5 e6 12 Bd3 Qh4+ 13 g3



13...Qe7

A miserable admission of failure? 13...Qxd4 loses the queen to 14 Bxg6+. Or did Bilek really think that this was better than the immediate 12...Qe7. Anyway he continued to lose tempi with his queen and was ultimately pulverized like a patzer.

14 Ne4 Qb4+ 15 Bc3 Qb6 16 Nd6+ Ke7 17 Qf3 Nh6 18 Qf4 Kd8 19 Nc4 Qc5 20 Ba5+ Ke7 21 Qg5+ Kf7 22 Nd6+ Kg8 23 Bc3 Nf5 24 Bxf5 gxf5 25 0-0-0



Now 25...h6 is necessary, but Black's position is horrible.

25...Ba6? 26 Nxf5 1-0

If 26...exf5 27 Rxd7.

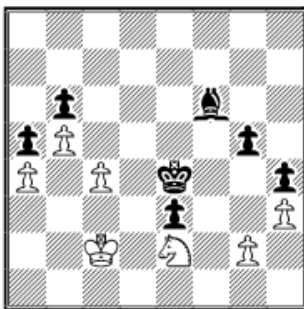
Portisch, on the other hand, was one of the world's leading grandmasters

still in the early 1970s. His rating was 265 ahead of Bob's, but he became enmeshed in a strange endgame.

Bob Wade – Lajos Portisch

Teesside 1972

Sicilian Defence [B42]

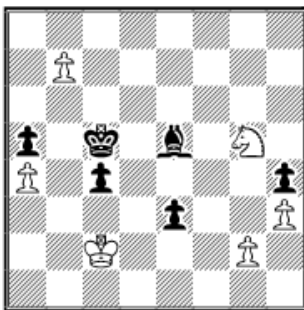


Normally a bishop is superior to a knight in such situations and Portisch has a passed pawn. It looks as if Black should be winning, but see what happens.

54 c5! bxc5 55 b6 Be5 56 b7 c4 57 Ng1 Bf4 58 Ne2 Bb8 59 Ng1 Kd5 60 Nf3 Kc6 61 Kc3 Kc5

It would hardly have been possible to lose after ...Kxb7 but Portisch is bamboozled and still dreams of victory.

62 Nxc5 Be5+ 63 Kc2



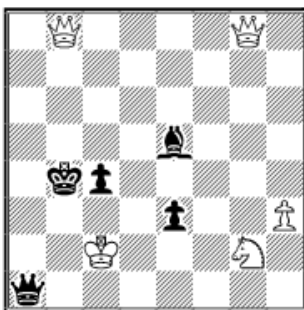
63...Kb4?

Fatal over-optimism. The b7-pawn had to be hunted down.

64 Nf3 Bf4 65 Nxc4 Kxa4

Now all six pawns are passed, but Wade's are wider split and he has the furthest advanced pawn.

66 g4 Kb4 67 Ng2 Be5 68 g5 a4 69 g6 a3 70 g7 a2 71 g8Q a1Q 72 b8Q+



Three queens temporarily on the board. Portisch must lose a piece. The rest is silence.

72...Bxb8 73 Qxb8+ Kc5 74 Qc7+ Kb5 75 Qb7+ Kc5 76 Qe7+ Kb5 77
Nxe3 Qa2+ 78 Kd1 Qb1+ 79 Ke2 Qd3+ 80 Kf3 c3 81 Qe5+ Kb6 82
Qd5 Qh7 83 Qb3+ Ka7 84 Qa4+ Kb8 85 h4 Qh8 86 Ke2 Qh7 87 Nc2
Qf5 88 Ne3 Qh7 89 Qb5+ Ka8 90 h5 Ka7 91 Qf5 1-0

By the late 1960s Bob was living in greater space and comfort than before as a lodger in the household of another former British champion, Alan Phillips, near Blackheath in south London. When Phillips then separated from his wife and moved out, Bob was able to move downstairs to the very large ground floor room that used to be the study, which gave ample space for his chess library and the many visiting experts and masters who came to do research there. These were the good years Bob deserved. Mrs. Phillips was tremendously supportive in putting up with us all, not to mention the cats. Unfortunately when her children had grown up and moved out, she naturally sold the house and Bob had to move out to less spacious accommodation nearby.

The big question now, to which some may know the answer, is what will happen to his library? At one point (before Batsford became insolvent in the late 1990s and was sold by the receiver to another media group) a deal had been negotiated through the British Chess Federation whereby Bob sold his library, in return for a pension, in a way that kept it available to him and others for research. As I understand it (perhaps wrongly), this arrangement collapsed at the receivership and ownership of the literature reverted to him, but he probably lost the pension. Maybe a new deal was then put in place. Ideally, the whole collection should be kept together and perhaps be amalgamated with the English Chess Library at Hastings, to which I referred in an earlier [column](#), because Bob had very many items that he had acquired from around the world (such as Soviet bulletins and periodicals, and rare books) which need to be kept available to researchers. If somebody can inform me of the situation about the library, I will mention this in a later article.

Meanwhile, you may wish to read the further [personal memoirs](#) of Bob where some games can also be found annotated.

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