

Mikhail Botvinnik

Botvinnik - Petrosian

The 1963 World Chess Championship Match

New In Chess 2010

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Foreword

How quickly time flies! Forty years ago, I, then a twelve-year old boy, was lucky enough to be a spectator at the world championship match between Botvinnik and Petrosian.

In fact, I was not just a mere spectator, but was there in the capacity of a pupil at the famous Botvinnik school – we were attending a training session outside Moscow, and visiting the games of the match itself was for us youngsters a remarkable inspiration for the future.

Since I was already quite a strong player, a candidate master, my impressions of the match were not just those of a child (usually the strongest impressions of all!), but also the reminiscences of someone who has given his life to chess.

The match did not start in as exciting a fashion as Botvinnik's previous world championship matches with Tal. At first, there was a tough struggle, and although Botvinnik won the first game, Petrosian found within himself the strength to take the lead. Botvinnik only succeeded in equalizing the score in Game 14. The greater part of the match was already over, and the players had won two games each, with ten draws.

However, levelling the score had cost Botvinnik too much energy (one must not forget that he was the older player by no less than 18 years!). In several games of this phase of the match, especially with white, he obtained a positional advantage, but did not succeed in defeating Petrosian, with his unique and wily defensive technique. Botvinnik's reserves of strength were exhausted, and he had achieved no advantage in the match. Petrosian's style enabled him to hold the balance with markedly less expenditure of energy. The 15th game proved decisive, in which Petrosian won in subtle positional style.

Like the true sportsman that he was, Botvinnik still tried to restore his position in the match, but lost two more games, after which the match was, in essence, over. The last few games were just a formality – Botvinnik was a realist and understood that he could not hope to save the match, and this explains the small number of moves played in the final three games.

Subsequently, Botvinnik wrote that it was only possible to play 16-18 games at full strength in a world championship match. As to the question of why the rules specified 24 games, the only answer was 'Tradition!'. In his last years, The Patriarch understood this as 'a sign of respect to the players of the past'.

Until now, there has never been a book in the Russian language with the games of this match annotated, and it is a pleasure to see this gap in our chess literature filled.

President of the 'Mikhail Botvinnik Fund'
Anatoly Karpov

Match table

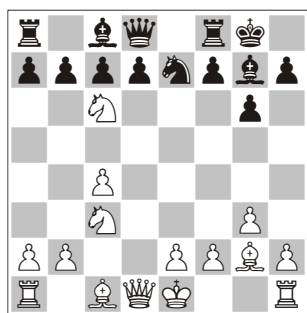
No. of game	Date	Opening	No. of moves	Botvinnik	Petrosian	Botvinnik	Petrosian
				Result		Match score	
1	23 March	Nimzo-Indian Defence	40	1	0	1	0
2	25 March	Queen's Gambit Accepted	35	½	½	1½	½
3	27-28 March	Queen's Indian Defence	86	½	½	2	1
4	30 March	English Opening	24	½	½	2½	1½
5	1-2 April	Grünfeld Indian Defence	48	0	1	2½	2½
6	3 April	Queen's Gambit Accepted	27	½	½	3	3
7	6-7 April	English Opening	52	0	1	3	4
8	8-9 April	Queen's Gambit Accepted	55	½	½	3½	4½
9	13-14 April	Dutch Defence	55	½	½	4	5
10	15 April	Queen's Gambit Accepted	43	½	½	4½	5½
11	17 April	Queen's Gambit	41	½	½	5	6
12	20-21 April	Queen's Gambit	53	½	½	5½	6½
13	22-23 April	Queen's Indian Defence	54	½	½	6	7
14	24-25 April	Queen's Gambit	57	1	0	7	7
15	29-30 April	Grünfeld Indian Defence	58	0	1	7	8
16	1-2 May	Queen's Gambit Accepted	54	½	½	7½	8½
17	6 May	Queen's Indian Defence	39	½	½	8	9
18	8-9 May	Queen's Gambit	61	0	1	8	10
19	11-12 May	Queen's Indian Defence	66	0	1	8	11
20	15 May	Queen's Gambit Accepted	21	½	½	8½	11½
21	18 May	English Opening	10	½	½	9	12
22	20 May	Queen's Gambit Accepted	10	½	½	9½	12½

GAME 7 6-7 April
Petrosian - Botvinnik
English Opening

Notes by V. Akopian.

This was a heavy defeat for Botvinnik, since thanks to a poorly played opening, there was essentially no real fight – White quickly obtained a winning position and duly converted his advantage to victory without particular difficulty.

- | | |
|-----------|--------|
| 1. c2-c4 | g7-g6 |
| 2. ♘g1-f3 | ♙f8-g7 |
| 3. ♘b1-c3 | e7-e5 |
| 4. g2-g3 | ♘g8-e7 |
| 5. ♙f1-g2 | 0-0 |
| 6. d2-d4 | e5xd4 |
| 7. ♘f3xd4 | ♘b8-c6 |
| 8. ♘d4xc6 | ... |



8. ... ♘e7xc6

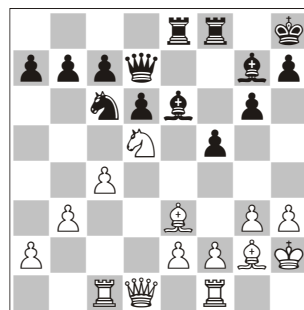
In the static position that now results, White's chances are superior, mainly because of his control of the strategically important square d5.

Consequently, the alternative capture 8...bxc6 would have been a more dynamic choice.

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 9. 0-0 | d7-d6 |
| 10. ♙c1-d2 | ♙c8-g4 |

The apparent gain of tempo resulting from this move is illusory, but even after 10...♙e6 11.b3 ♖d7 12.♗e1 ♗ab8 13.♗c1 ♘e5 14.f4 ♘c6 15.♘d5 ♘e7 16.♙c3, or 10...♗e8 11.h3 ♘e5 12.b3 c6 13.♗c1 ♖c7 14.♙e3 ♙e6 15.♗d2, as was played later, Black is not assured of equality.

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 11. h2-h3 | ♙g4-e6 |
| 12. b2-b3 | ♖d8-d7 |
| 13. ♘g1-h2 | ♗a8-e8 |
| 14. ♗a1-c1 | f7-f5 |
| 15. ♘c3-d5 | ♘g8-h8 |
| 16. ♙d2-e3 | ... |



Black's position is extremely unpleasant. White has no difficulty in finding ways to improve the position of his pieces, whilst Black can hardly do anything useful. It is therefore hardly surprising that he quickly falls into a lost position.

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 16. ... | ♙e6-g8 |
| 17. ♖d1-d2 | ♘c6-d8 |
| 18. ♗f1-d1 | ♘d8-e6 |
| 19. ♘d5-f4 | ... |

Now the knight has left c6, Black has trouble defending his queenside.

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 19. ... | ♘e6xf4 |
| 20. ♙e3xf4 | ♖d7-c8 |
| 21. h3-h4 | ... |

This and the following move are typical of Petrosian's thinking – before under-

taking the decisive action, he improves the position of his pieces still further.

21. ... ♖e8-e7

22. ♙g2-f3 ♙g8-f7

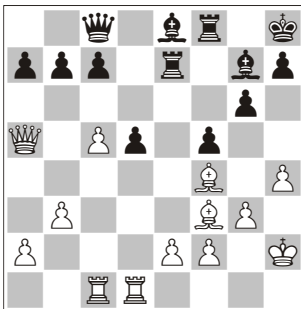
Here, probably, 22...b6 should have been preferred, although even then it is not hard for White to increase the pressure, for example by 23.b4 or 23.h5.

23. ♖d2-a5 ♙f7-e8?

He could avoid immediate catastrophe only by 23...♙b8, when on 24.c5 Black still has 24...b6. The text move is completely incomprehensible, since White also wins after the simple 24.♙xa7, for example: 24...♙c6 25.♙xc6 bxc6 26.♙xd6.

24. c4-c5 d6-d5

Desperation or oversight? Whatever the answer, 24...dxc5 25.♙xc5 would not have been significantly better.



25. ♙f4-d6 ...

In practice, the end of the affair, although the game continues for quite some time.

25. ... ♖c8-d7

26. ♙d6xe7 ♖d7xe7

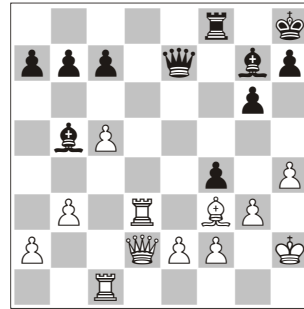
27. ♖d1xd5 ...

Probably simplest of all was 27.e3, preventing 27...f4, and in the event of 27...d4 28.exd4 f4 29.♙c3 White should win easily.

27. ... f5-f4

28. ♙a5-d2 ♙e8-c6

29. ♖d5-d3 ♙c6-b5



Now Black wins back the exchange, but the resulting endgame, a pawn down, is also hopeless for him.

30. ♖d3-d4 f4xg3+

31. f2xg3 ♙g7xd4

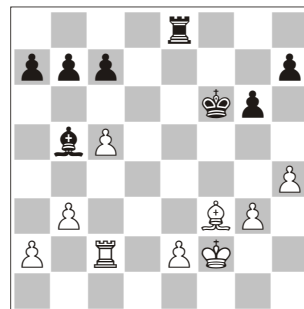
32. ♙d2xd4+ ♙e7-g7

33. ♙d4xg7+ ♙h8xg7

34. ♖c1-c2 ♖f8-e8

35. ♙h2-g2 ♙g7-f6

36. ♙g2-f2



36. ... ♙b5-c6

Somewhat more stubborn was 36...♙a6, but this could still not influence the result of the game. The further course of the game requires no comment.

37. ♙f3xc6 b7xc6

38. ♖c2-c4 ♙f6-e5

Petrosian's view of the match

I never thought that I would play a match for the world championship, and still less, that my opponent would be Mikhail Botvinnik. To me, as to many others, it seemed that Botvinnik would always be able to fight off all attempts to take the world crown away from him, both those of the players of the pre-war generation, and those who emerged after the war.

In fact, the biggest danger, about which chess fans soon forgot, arose in his first match, when Botvinnik took the stage of the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall in 1951, three years after crowning his quest for the world championship so decisively, to face David Bronstein. It is hard to overestimate the significance of this match. For the first time, Soviet chess players saw Botvinnik fighting an opponent equal to himself. Bronstein surprised the whole chess world in the very first game. The Dutch Defence had served Botvinnik faithfully and successfully for many years, and the decision to confront the World Champion with his own favourite weapon was an extremely bold one, from both a pure chess, as well as a psychological viewpoint. However, as well as his achievements in this match, Bronstein also committed a number of mistakes. He only played the King's Indian once, and then only when it was already rather late in the match. This is easy to understand – Botvinnik was probably well-prepared for this opening. But the King's Indian belongs to those openings in which, without great practical experience of handling its typical positions, analytical work by itself cannot guarantee success. In King's Indian set-ups, the positional battle often hangs on specific tactical points.

Bronstein also handled several endgame-type positions rather carelessly. One only has to recall the missed chances in the 18th game, which cost him half a point.

One can only imagine how hard this match was for both players. The whole match proceeded in a balanced struggle, with neither player ever managing to establish a lead of more than one point. Two titans battled each other to a standstill, with neither able to overcome the other. The result: 12:12. But the FIDE rules laid down that the undefeated champion retained the title.

1954. General dismay. After four games of the Botvinnik-Smyslov match, the score was 3,5:0,5 in favour of the World Champion. Naturally, such a large margin forced Smyslov to adopt risky tactics. He started choosing risky and complicated schemes as Black. An understandable decision. But was this really typical of Smyslov? What had happened to his legendary calmness and cold-bloodedness? Where was his thoroughly studied and tested opening repertoire, leading play into well-known, fireproof positions, in which it is easy to resist the opponent's pressure? Of course, when the opponent has such a lead, it is not so easy to choose simple, well-known schemes. It will be very hard to play for a win in such positions.

Igor Botvinnik

The training match Botvinnik - Furman January - February 1963

As far as one can judge, the games of this training match are unknown to most readers within Russia. Whether they have been published abroad, goodness only knows. Certainly, in the two standard, multi-volume Russian works on Botvinnik's games, there are no training games from 1963. Furthermore, when preparing the complete English edition of Botvinnik's games, I managed to make use of a six-volume manuscript on Botvinnik's career, prepared by V. D. Baturinsky (the most complete collection of Botvinnik's games of which I am aware), and this match was not there either.⁷

This can only be explained either by a deliberate piece of self-censorship by Botvinnik, or else by the fact that the match was simply forgotten about.

These games were preserved in a notebook, which bore the characteristic title (for those days) of 'Delegate to the IV Plenum of the Central Soviet DSO "Trud" Profsoyuzov of the RSFSR, 10-11 December 1959, Moscow'.

It is well known that S. A. Furman worked as an openings consultant to Botvinnik, in his world championship matches of 1961 and 1963. This happened after Botvinnik was forced to manage without the help of his old comrade Grigory Goldberg. Mikhail Moiseevich told how, after his first match with Tal, he sensed Goldberg's admiration for the young champion, but even so, in the summer of 1960, he sent his old comrade a letter (Goldberg was on holiday in the Crimea at the time), with an invitation to be his second for the return match. He received a 9-page reply, setting out numerous conditions necessary for him to have any hope of revenge, all of which, Botvinnik laughed, were impossible to fulfil!

And now it is time to dispose of one legend, which has made the rounds of the chess world. In the Russian book on Furman there is a story about Furman's time as

7 Translator's note: As far as I can tell, these games have not been published anywhere outside Russia, either. In particular, they do not appear in the 2006 volume *Censored! Botvinnik's secret games*, edited by Jan Timman. That book aimed to give as complete a collection of Botvinnik's training games as was possible, and included a number of games against Furman from 1961, but there are none from the year 1963.

Igor Botvinnik

Mikhail Botvinnik's final notebook

Of course, one can only be so categorical in relation to chess notes. When I faced the question of how best to preserve Botvinnik's legacy, as scattered about in various notebooks and jotters, the answer was obvious: we should publish that material which would otherwise become unsuitable with the passage of time. So, we produced the books published by the Mikhail Botvinnik Fund. It is curious that in several of the notebooks, as well as chess notes, there are details of dates for car services, oil changes, and also the times of buses from Perkhushkovo to Nikolina Gora!⁸ Botvinnik never made any secret of his method of preparation. He willingly published his views on such an important instrument for the development of a chess player. Admittedly, though, it must be emphasized that only a player with a taste for hard research work would be able to apply that same method. And whilst his further articles on this were published as far back as before the war, even as late as 1994, a series of articles appeared in the Spanish magazine *Jaque*, and also in the Russian journal *64*, summing up the results of further research 'on this theme'.

It was a characteristic of Botvinnik that he never forgot to point out the sources of his ideas, and his predecessors, a very valuable thing for the modern student. For example, when in the mid-1980s I had to defend my thesis at the higher school for trainers, on the subject of 'The system of preparation for competitions', Botvinnik gave me this advice: 'Look at Alekhine's article in the English magazine *Chess* for 1937, in which he described his preparations for the return match with Euwe.'

Botvinnik had the invaluable ability to pick up on something new, adapt it and bring it into his own arsenal.

After the publication of the series of articles in 1994, Botvinnik expressed the desire to see these published as a separate pamphlet, and this was done by the Mikhail Botvinnik Fund in 1996. 'A method of preparing for competitions' was published in an edition of 1,000 copies, and is already completely sold out.

Thus, there are a number of publications, from which one can learn of Botvinnik's preparation system, and use it for the development of a player.

8 Translator's note: The latter was the location of Botvinnik's dacha, or summer house.