

A quiz for the reader:

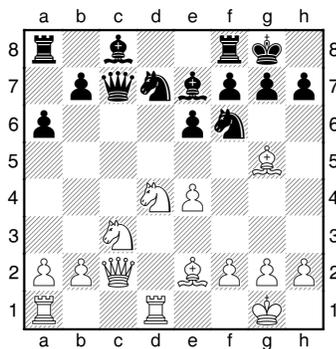
Name all of the Americans who have reached the status of Candidate for the world championship:

The criteria are one of either public acclaim, invitations, or qualification to the final candidate's competitions or a World Championship match (or an historical equivalent).

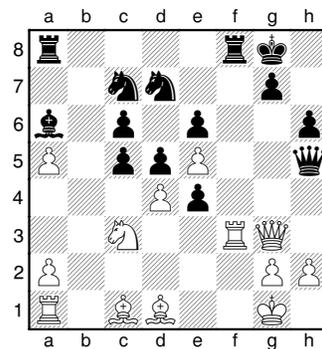
This makes the whole task rather subjective, especially when you bring into question who you might even consider to be an American! My answer will be revealed on the next page, but I will tell you that my list contains 12 names starting with Paul Morphy. Feel free to let me know whom YOU think I might have omitted, or included when I should not have. (send your thoughts and opinions to: indyfmchess@gmail.com)

A Challenge for the Readers

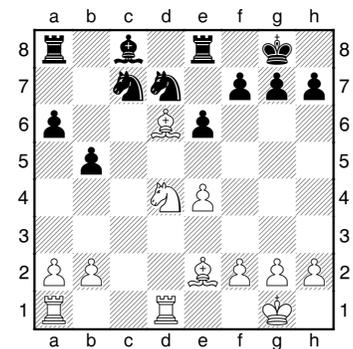
Evaluate and analyze the following three positions:



13. ♙c1-g5



22. ... ♜f5xe4



17. ♙e7-d6



Do you recognize this player?

It is GM Robert E Byrne (circa 1963) in a very typical pose.

He lived in Indiana (Indianapolis) for much of his early professional life after graduating from Yale. It is the time of year that brings him to mind as his birthday is April 20 (and he would be 92). His death, seven years ago, was on April 13, just a few days before his 85th birthday.

I have always been very interested in how do chess players become stronger. Robert Byrne is one who has fascinated me for a long time in this regard. How did he manage in his 40's to "all of a sudden" join the world's elite?

I believe it is time for me to now delve deeper into this question and see what I can discover. After all, I would still like to improve my game(!) and maybe I can learn something of value.

Robert Byrne: Building the Foundation

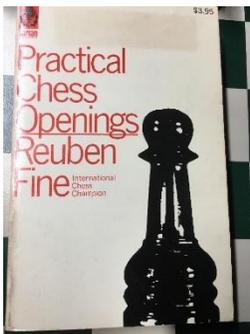
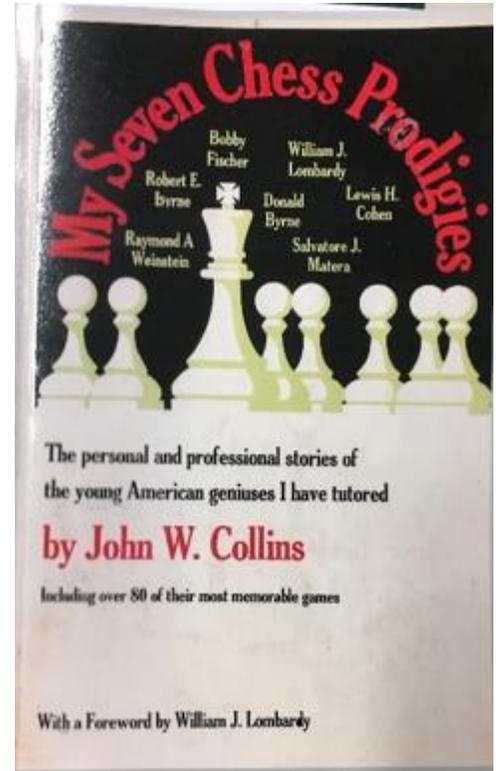
Robert Eugene Byrne is perhaps the most unheralded GM in American chess for having achieved World Championship contender status. This is a very small and select group: **Morphy, Pillsbury, Marshall, Fine, Reshevsky, Benko, Fischer, Byrne, Seirawan, Kamsky, Nakamura, and Caruana**. Morphy and Fischer reigned supreme, while Marshall, Reshevsky, Kamsky, and Caruana have fallen short only at the last hurdle.

Byrne was born in Brooklyn [20 April, 1928] and died in Ossining (NY) [12 April 2013]. After his graduation from Yale [Philosophy; 1952] he came to Indiana for post grad work, and then became a professor at Indiana University. Indianapolis became his residence until the late 60's when he returned to New York. There he finally became a fulltime chess pro in the late 60's before launching his second 'main stream' career as the New York Times chess columnist. This was a position he held from 1972 until his retirement in 2006.

Byrne's best chess results came in the late 60's and early 70's as he finally devoted himself to playing professionally. He had always been a known and promising player, but he had put his schooling, and other work to the forefront.

How did he become so good later? Let's start at the beginning and see how his foundation was built. I recall reading John Collins' book, **My Seven Chess Prodigies**, when it first came out. Although at that time I was more interested in the info about one Robert James Fischer.

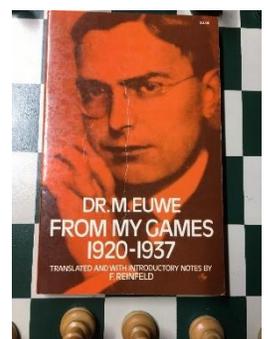
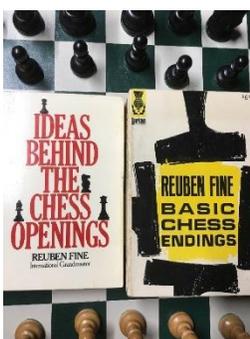
This book had long been out of print and available only at libraries, but I recently noticed that it was reprinted(!) after the original copyright had expired, and I eagerly snatched up a copy.



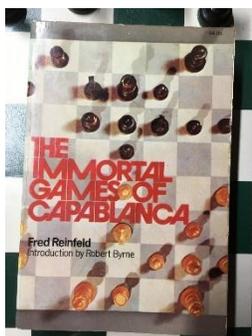
Collins very fondly describes the early chess life of these players. In the case of Robert Byrne it shows the foundation that later prepared him for success.

He had a younger brother (Donald) who loved to play (but didn't study much) and they had several chess clubs where they played. Additionally, they were in "the city" where other young rivals [George Kramer, Walter Shipman, Arthur Bisguier] would spur them on. Robert also liked to read and study the game. His first book was **Modern Chess Openings** (6th edition by Fine) because, as he said, any player who was a player seemed to have that book. As Collins remarked, "Perhaps that wasn't the best 'book' to start with, but he quickly supplemented it with two other excellent ones by Reuben Fine, **Ideas Behind the Chess Opening** and **Basic Chess Endings**.

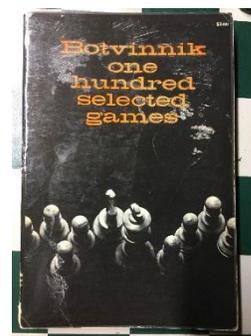
He spent a good 3-4 months going through BCE with a fine-tooth comb from cover-to-cover. When you see some comments from the chess magazines and columns of that era they refer to Robert Byrne as "**an endgame specialist**" even while he is still in school.



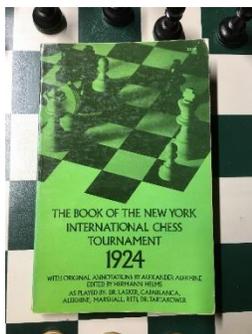
Robert Byrne: Building the Foundation



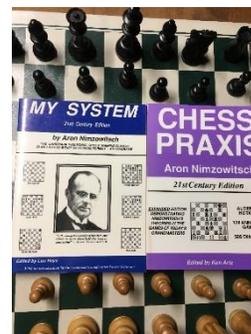
Robert Byrne thought very highly of Reuben Fine as the epitome of what a chess player should be. Even so, he quickly became completely familiar with the game collections of Alekhine and Euwe. The two recent world champions. Plus, Alekhine's magnificent New York 1924 book.



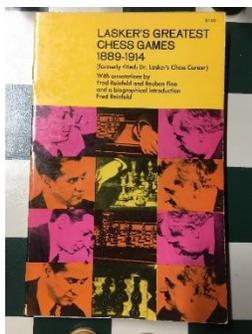
Of course, there was the Nimzowitsch period with delving into his two main books. And a bit later he went through games from the two giants of chess, Lasker and Capablanca.



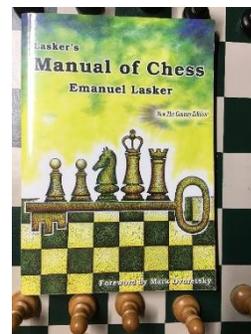
Despite all of this Collins described Byrne's early play, more Steinitzian(!). Which could easily be traced to a good reading of *Lasker's Manual of Chess*.



Later he took on the coming champion, Mikhail Botvinnik. Here he read the Dutch version of 'One Hundred Selected Games'. Clearly, he played a lot of games. His Highschool chess club had 200+ members. His brother was around, and he played the rapid tournaments every week at the Manhattan and Marshall Chess Clubs. [Eventually winning many.]



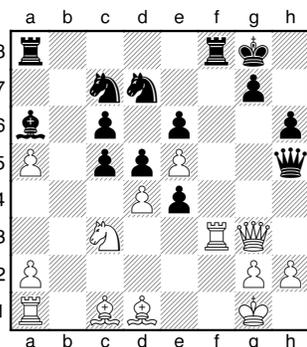
But more than anything else, when he was 14, he and his brother (12) rang the doorbell to the home of John Collins, and enquired if this was the Hawthorne chess club? Indeed, it was, and there they played regularly with strong players, literally hundreds of games of "Rapid Chess" [At this time that meant a game where a bell went off every 10 seconds, and when it went it off, you moved. (I have never played 10 seconds a move chess, but I hear it was a dance, and rhythmic.) A bell and everyone moves, pause, a bell, pause, etc. Much different than what I grew up with as blitz...]



John Collins influence on American chess can not be overlooked. His story is one of a true passion for chess (Once he had discovered it.) as well as a great family story with his sister Ethel's great devotion to her brother. John, himself, was a top player (In the top 15 of the country) but he devoted his energy to promotion of the game, writing for others, and teaching all in any way he could. His story is one that has not yet been told to do him full justice.

Kramer, George - Byrne, Robert [D30] Manhattan CC Jr (Ch), 1943

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. ♘f3 ♘f6 4. e3 e6
5. ♗e5 ♗bd7 6. ♕d3 ♕d6 7. f4 0-0
8. c5 ♕xe5 9. fxe5 ♗e8 10. ♖h5 h6
11. 0-0 ♖e7 12. ♗c3 f6 13. ♖h4 b6
14. b4 a5 15. bxa5 bxc5 16. ♖f3 ♕a6
17. ♕c2 ♖d8 18. ♖g4 f5 19. ♖g6 ♗c7
20. e4 ♖e8 21. ♖g3 ♖h5 22. ♕d1
fxe4



23. ♖f6 ♖xf6 24. exf6 ♖f7 25. ♖xc7
♖xf6 26. ♖f4 ♖xd4+ 27. ♖e3
♖xe3+ 28. ♕xe3 d4 29. ♕xd4 cxd4
30. ♗xe4 ♕c4 31. ♕b3 ♕d5 32. ♗d6
♖xa5 33. ♕xd5 ♖xd5 34. ♗c8 ♖f7
35. a4 ♖a5 36. ♗d6+ ♖e7 37. ♗c4
♖a6 38. ♖f2 e5 39. ♖e2 ♖e6
40. ♗d2 ♗d5 41. ♗b2 c5 42. ♖c2
♗b6
0-1

Robert Byrne: Building the Foundation

That was the earliest recorded game that John Collins had by Byrne.

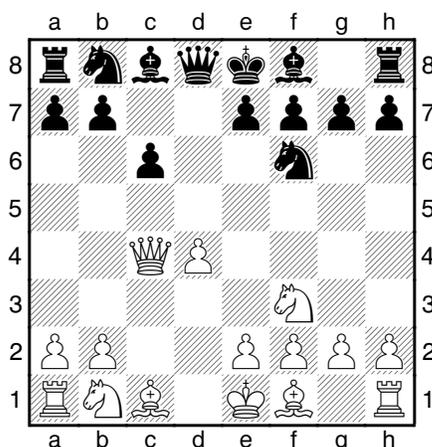
In this article we will look at events associated with his 'hero', Reuben Fine. The game above was from 1943 and since Robert had been playing at the Hawthorne since 1942, improving, as he said, "by leaps and bounds". It was now February 1944, and, in fact, this was to be a breakout year for Robert. He and his brother ventured down to Times Square where the man himself, Reuben Fine, was giving a simultaneous display. Let's look at this game:

Fine, Reuben - Byrne, Robert [D23]

Simultaneous, 21 Feb 1944 [FM Lester VanMeter]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♚a4+ c6
5.♚xc4

The QGA was an early favorite of Byrne. This line could be expected, and was probably 'prepared' just for this occasion.



5...♘bd7

Let's have a look at what might have been available for study from the "books", and I'm sure that he had played many, many games with this defense already.

[5...♘f5 6.♘c3 (6.g3 ♘bd7 7.♘g2 h6 8.0-0 e6 9.♘bd2 ♘e7 10.♚b3 ♚b6 11.♚d1 0-0 12.♘c4 ♚a6 13.♘fd2 c5 14.♚b3 ♘b6 15.♘xb6 axb6 16.e4 ♘g6 17.d5 exd5 18.exd5 ♘d3 19.♚e1 c4 20.♚c3 ♚fe8 21.♘f1 ♘d6 22.♘xh6 ♚xe1 23.♚xe1 ♚xa2 24.♘d2 ♚a5 25.♚c1 ♚c5 26.♘e3 ♚c7 27.♘d4 ♚e8 28.♚xe8+ ♘xe8 29.♚e3 ♚e7 30.♘xb6 ♚xe3 31.♘xe3 ♘e5 32.♘f1 ♘d6 33.♘c7 b5 34.♘g4 ♘xb2 35.♘xd6 ♘e4 36.♘e3 ♘d4 37.♘g2 ♘d3 38.♘b4 c3 39.d6

c2 40.♘d2 b4 41.d7 ♘b6 42.♘d5 ♘h7
43.♘b3 ♘xe3 44.♘xe3 1-0 (44)
Treysman,G-Hanauer,M New York (Hotel
Astor) 1936) 6...e6 (6...♘bd7 7.g3 ♘e4
8.♘g2 ♘d6 9.♚a4 ♘b6 10.♚d1 ♚c8
11.0-0 ♘h3 12.e4 ♘xg2 13.♘xg2 e6
14.d5 ♘e7 15.e5 ♘b5 16.d6 ♘xc3
17.bxc3 ♘d8 18.♚d4 c5 19.♚g4 ♚g8
20.♚e4 ♚h8 21.♘e3 ♘d7 22.♘d2 f5
23.♚a4 ♘f7 24.f4 a6 25.♘g1 b5 26.♚c2
♚c6 27.c4 ♚f8 28.♘b3 b4 29.a3 bxa3
30.♚xa3 a5 31.♚g2 ♚xg2+ 32.♘xg2 a4
33.♘xc5 ♘xc5 34.♘xc5 ♚c8 35.♘f2 ♚xc4
36.♚fa1 ♚c2 37.♚1a2 ♚xa2 38.♚xa2 ♘g6
39.♚xa4 ♚f7 40.♚a8 ♚d7 41.♘f3 ♘f7
42.♘e2 1-0 (42) Botvinnik,M-Levenfish,G
Moscow 1935) 7.g3 ♘bd7 8.♘g2 ♘c2 9.e3
♘e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.a3 a5 12.♚e2 ♘g6
13.e4 ♚b6 14.h3 ♚a6 15.♚e3 c5 16.e5
♘d5 17.♘xd5 exd5 18.♘d2 ♘e4 19.♘c3
c4 20.♘e1 ♘xg2 21.♘xg2 b5 22.f4 ♚h6
23.♚f3 b4 24.♘d2 ♘b6 25.g4 ♚c6 26.f5 f6
27.♘f4 ♚fc8 28.exf6 ♘xf6 29.♘e6 c3
30.bxc3 ♘c4 31.♘f4 ♘xa3 32.g5 ♘d8
33.♘e5 ♚a7 34.♚h5 ♘c4 35.cxb4 ♘xe5
36.dxe5 ♘b6+ 37.♘h1 d4+ 38.♚f3 ♚xf3+
39.♚xf3 ♚c3 40.♚ff1 d3 41.f6 ♚c6
42.♘xg7 ♚xg7 43.fxg7 axb4 44.♚f6 ♘d4
45.♚a8+ ♘xg7 46.♚xc6 d2 47.♚c7+ ♘g6
48.♚g8+ ♘f5 49.♚f8+ ♘e4 50.♚f1 ♘xe5
51.♚c4+ ♘d3 52.♚xb4 ♘g3 53.♘g2 ♘e1
54.♚b1 ♘h4 55.♚b3+ ♘e2 56.♚b5 ♘e3
57.♚d5 ♘e2 58.♚f7 1-0 (58)

Robert Byrne: Building the Foundation

Bogoljubow, E-Alekhine, A Germany 1934
MainBase [ChessBase];

5...g6 6.g3 ♟g7 7.♟g2 ♟e6 (7...0-0 8.0-0 ♞bd7 9.♞c2 ♞b6 10.♞c3 ♞bd5 11.e4 ♞xc3 12.bxc3 c5 13.♟a3 cxd4 14.♞xd4 a6 15.♞b3 ♞c7 16.f4 ♞g4 17.♞ae1 ♞d8 18.h3 ♞xd4 19.cxd4 ♟xd4+ 20.♞h1 ♟e6 21.♞f3 ♞f6 22.♞c1 ♞d7 23.♞fd1 ♟xh3 24.♞c4 ♟g4 25.♞cxd4 1-0 (25) Fine, R-Green, M New York 1939)

8.♞c2 ♟f5 9.♞a4 ♞bd7 10.♞c3 ♞e4 11.0-0 ♞b6 12.♞b3 0-0 13.♞d1 ♞xc3 14.bxc3 ♞d5 15.♞d2 ♞d7 16.a4 ♟e6 17.♞c2 ♞ad8 18.♞b3 ♞c8 19.♞c5 ♟c4 20.♞b1 e5 21.e3 ♟a6 22.♞xa6 bxa6 23.♟a3 ♞fe8 24.♟c5 ♞d7 25.♟xa7 ♞c7 26.♟c5 ♞xc5 27.dxc5 ♞xd1+ 28.♞xd1 ♞a5 29.♟xc6 ♞c8 30.♟d5 ♞xc5 31.♞b3 ♞c7 32.♞b1 ♟f8 33.♞a2 ♞d7 34.♞b6 ♞g7 35.c4 a5 36.♞b2 ♟d6 37.♞b5 ♞d8 38.♞b7 ♟c7 39.♞c6 h5 40.h4 ♞e7 41.♞a7 ♞d8 42.♞g2 ♞f8 43.c5 ♞g7 44.♟xf7 ♞xf7 45.♞a6 ♟d6 46.♞d5+ ♞g7 47.♞xd6 ♞e8 48.♞e6 ♞xc5 49.♞b7+ 1-0 (49)

Flohr, S-Stoltz, G Warsaw 1935;
5...e6 6.♞c2 ♞fd7 7.e4 ♟b4+ 8.♞c3 h6 9.♟e2 ♞a5 10.0-0 ♟xc3 11.bxc3 e5 12.♞d2 exd4 13.cxd4 ♞g5 14.♞c4 ♞e7 15.♟a3 ♞e6 16.d5 cxd5 17.♞d6+ ♞f8 18.♞ac1 1-0 (18) Alekhine, A-Garcia Caracas 1939]

6.♞c2 [D23: Queen's Gambit Accepted: 3 Nf3 Nf6 sidelines]

6...e6 7.e4N

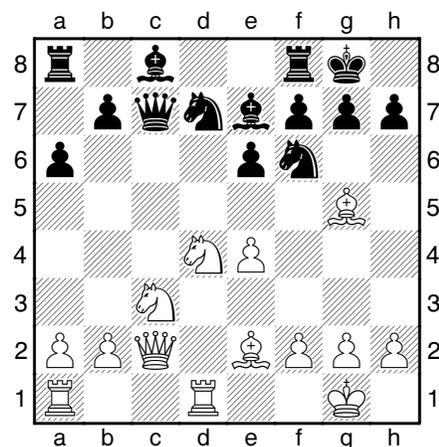
[Predecessor: 7.g3 ♟b4+ 8.♞c3 0-0 9.♟g2 ♞e7 10.0-0 e5 11.e4 exd4 12.♞xd4 ♞b6 13.♞e1 ♟xc3 14.♞xc3 1-0 (35) Fine, R-Ohman, H Dallas 1940 14...♞e8 15.♟f4 ♟e6 16.a4 ♞h5 17.a5 ♞xf4 18.gxf4 ♞c8 19.f5 ♟d7 20.a6 ♞b8 21.e5 c5 22.e6 cxd4 23.exd7 ♞xd7

24.♞xd4 ♞b6 25.♞xd7 ♞xe1+ 26.♞xe1 ♞xd7 27.axb7 ♞f8 28.b4 ♞d8 29.♞c1 ♞b8 30.♞c8 ♞e7 31.♟f1 a6 32.♟c4 ♞f8 33.♞g2 ♞d8 34.♟xf7 ♞d7 35.♞xb8 1-0 (35)]

7...c5 8.♞c3 [The position is equal.]

8...cxd4 9.♞xd4 a6 10.♟e2 ♟e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♞d1 ♞c7 13.♟g5

The GM has played logical chess, improving his position. Byrne has been playing "correct" defensive chess, albeit a bit too passively. With his last Fine has set his young opponent a question... Does Byrne have an answer?

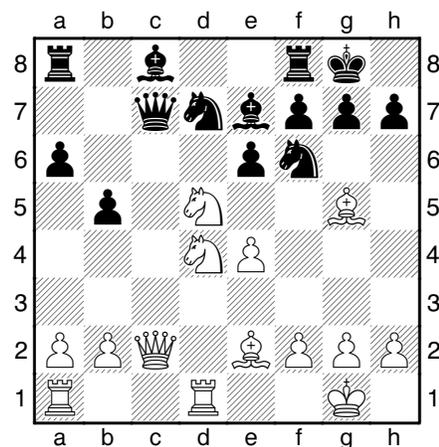


[White threatens to win with Nd5.]

13...b5? [13...♞e8=]

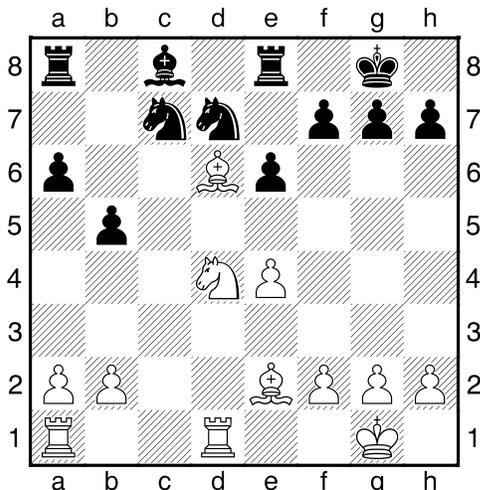
Byrne fails to see the consequences to the end...

14.♞d5!±



[Discovered Attack]

14...♖xd5 15.♔xc7 [Overworked Piece]
 15...♖xc7 16.♗xe7 [Black must now prevent Nc6.]
 16...♖e8 17.♗d6↑



[Black is under strong pressure.]

... and again, Byrne fails to see deeply enough and simply guards...

17...♖a7? [

Reuben Fine was tremendously strong (possibly **the** strongest player in the world in the late 30's.) and in 1945 he played four(!) strong players simultaneously blindfolded at 10 seconds a move. ... He won them all, too!

Fine, Reuben - Byrne, Robert Eugene [D04]

New York blindfold sim 10" New York (1), 1945

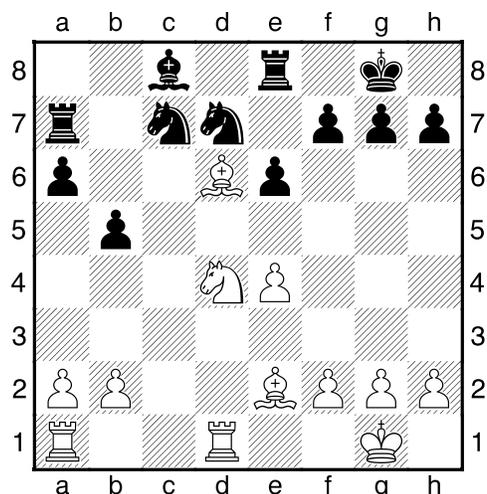
1.d4 d5 2.e3 ♖f6 3.♗f3 g6 4.♗d3 ♗g7 5.0-0 ♖bd7 6.b3 0-0 7.♗b2 c5 8.♗bd2 a6
 9.♔e2 b5 10.c4 cxd4 11.exd4 bxc4 12.bxc4 ♖b6 13.♖ab1 ♖a4 14.♗a1 dxc4 15.♗xc4
 ♗e6 16.♗ce5 a5 17.♗b5 ♖b6 18.♗c6 ♔d6 19.♗g5 ♗g4 20.♔xe7 ♖c8 21.♔b7 h6
 22.♔xa8 hxg5 23.♗e5 ♗f5 24.♖bc1 ♗e7 25.♔xa5 ♗fd5 26.♗c4 ♗f4 27.♔c5 ♔d8
 28.♖fe1 ♔a8 29.♗f1 ♗ed5 30.f3 ♖c8 31.♔b5 ♖f8 32.a4 ♗h7 33.a5 f6 34.♗c6 g4
 35.fxg4 ♗xg4 36.a6 ♖c7 37.♔b7 ♗fd5 38.♔xa8
 1-0

They played only once in an official tournament game, and that encounter ended peacefully...

Fine, Reuben - Byrne, Robert Eugene [E03]

Wertheim Memorial New York (5), 09 Jun 1951

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 ♖f6 4.g3 dxc4 5.♔a4+ ♖bd7 6.♗g2 a6 7.♔xc4 b5 8.♔c2 ♗b7
 9.0-0 c5 10.a4 ♗e7 11.♖d1 0-0 12.e3 ♔b6 13.♔e2 ♖fc8 14.♗bd2 h6 15.axb5 axb5
 16.♖xa8 ♗xa8 17.dxc5 ♗xc5 18.♗d4 ♗xg2 19.♗xg2 b4 20.f3 ♗fd7
 ½-½



[Instead 17...e5± was called for. 18.♗c6 (18.♗xc7 exd4 19.a4 bxa4±) 18...♗e6 19.♗e7+ (19.♗xe5 ♗xe5 20.♗xe5 f6±) 19...♗h8]

18.♗c6+- ♖b7 19.♖ac1 ♗f6 20.♗a5 ♗a8
 21.♖xc8 ♖xc8 22.♗xb7

[Accuracy: White = 71%, Black = 48%.]
 1-0