



Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall - from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness

By Frank Brady

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Endgame is acclaimed biographer Frank Brady's decades-in-the-making tracing of the meteoric ascent—and confounding *descent*—of enigmatic genius Bobby Fischer. Only Brady, who met Fischer when the prodigy was only 10 and shared with him some of his most dramatic triumphs, could have written this book, which has much to say about the nature of American celebrity and the distorting effects of fame. Drawing from Fischer family archives, recently released FBI files, and Bobby's own emails, this account is unique in that it limns Fischer's *entire* life—an odyssey that took the Brooklyn-raised chess champion from an impoverished childhood to the covers of *Time*, *Life* and *Newsweek* to recognition as “the most famous man in the world” to notorious recluse.

At first all one noticed was how gifted Fischer was. Possessing a 181 I.Q. and remarkable powers of concentration, Bobby memorized hundreds of chess books in several languages, and he was only 13 when he became the youngest chess master in U.S. history. But his strange behavior started early. In 1972, at the historic Cold War showdown in Reykjavik, Iceland, where he faced Soviet champion Boris Spassky, Fischer made headlines with hundreds of petty demands that nearly ended the competition.

It was merely a prelude to what was to come.

Arriving back in the United States to a hero's welcome, Bobby was mobbed wherever he went—a figure as exotic and improbable as any American pop culture had yet produced. No player of a mere “board game” had ever ascended to such heights. Commercial sponsorship offers poured in, ultimately topping \$10 million—but Bobby demurred. Instead, he began tithing his limited money to an apocalyptic religion and devouring anti-Semitic literature.

After years of poverty and a stint living on Los Angeles' Skid Row, Bobby remerged in 1992 to play Spassky in a multi-million dollar rematch—but the experience only *deepened* a paranoia that had formed years earlier when he came to believe that the Soviets wanted him dead for taking away “their” title. When

the dust settled, Bobby was a wanted man—transformed into an international fugitive because of his decision to play in Montenegro despite U.S. sanctions. Fearing for his life, traveling with bodyguards, and wearing a long leather coat to ward off knife attacks, Bobby lived the life of a celebrity fugitive – one drawn increasingly to the bizarre. Mafiosi, Nazis, odd attempts to breed an heir who could perpetuate his chess-genius DNA—all are woven into his late-life tapestry.

And yet, as Brady shows, the most notable irony of Bobby Fischer’s strange descent – which had reached full plummet by 2005 when he turned down yet *another* multi-million dollar payday—is that despite his incomprehensible behavior, there were many who remained fiercely loyal to him. Why that was so is at least partly the subject of this book—one that at last answers the question: “Who *was* Bobby Fischer?”

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Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall - from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness By Frank Brady Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #124997 in Books
- Published on: 2012-01-17
- Released on: 2012-01-17
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .90" w x 5.20" l, .50 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 440 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Books of the Month, February 2011: There may be no one more qualified than Frank Brady to write the definitive biography of Bobby Fischer. Brady's *Profile of a Prodigy* (originally published in 1969) chronicled the chess icon's early years, a selection of 90 games, and (in later editions) his 1972 World Championship match with Boris Spassky. With *Endgame*, published two years after Fischer's death, Brady's on-and-off proximity to Fischer lends new depth to the latter's full and twisted life story. Though Fischer's pinnacle artistry on the chessboard may often be discussed in the same breath with his eventual paranoia and outspoken anti-Semitism, the particular turns and travels of his post-World Championship years (half his life) lend his story most of its vexing oddity: the niggling insistence on seemingly arbitrary conditions for his matches, the years on the lam after flagrantly disregarding U.S. economic sanctions, his incarceration in Japan, his eventual citizenship and quiet demise in Iceland. All told, Fischer's life was like none other, and told through the lens of Brady's personal familiarity and access to new source material, results in an utterly engaging read. --*Jason Kirk*

Guest Reviewer: Dick Cavett



Dick Cavett is the host of “The Dick Cavett Show”---which aired on ABC from 1968 to 1975 and on public television from 1977 to 1982---Dick Cavett is the author, most recently, of *Talk Show: Confrontations, Pointed Commentary, and Off-Screen Secrets*. The co-author of *Cavett* (1974) and *Eye on Cavett* (1983), he has also appeared on Broadway in *Otherwise Engaged* and *Into the Woods*, and as narrator in *The Rocky Horror Show*, and has made guest appearances in movies and on TV shows including *Forrest Gump* and *The Simpsons*. His column appears in the Opinionator blog on *The New York Times* website. Mr. Cavett lives in New York City and Montauk, N.Y.

Even if you don't give a damn about chess, or Bobby Fischer, you'll find yourself engrossed by Frank Brady's book about Fischer, which reads like a novel.

The facts of Bobby's life (I knew him from several memorable appearances on “The Dick Cavett Show” on both sides of the Big Tournament) are presented in page-turner fashion. Poor Bobby was blessed and cursed by his genius, and his story has the arc of a Greek tragedy---with a grim touch of mad King Lear at the end.

The brain power and concentrated days and nights Bobby spent studying the game left much of him undeveloped, unable to join conversations on other subjects. Later in his life, unhappy with his limited knowledge of things beyond the chess board, he compensated with massive study---applying that same hard-butt dedication to other fields: politics, classics, religion, philosophy and more. He found a hide-away nook in a Reykjavic bookstore---barred from his homeland, Iceland had welcomed him back---where he read in marathon sessions. (After he was recognized, he never went back to his cozy cul de sac.)

In Brady's telling the high drama of the Spassky match quickens the pulse; the contest that made America a chess-crazed land was seen by more people than the Superbowl. People skipped school and played sick in vast numbers, glued to watching Shelby Lyman explain what was happening. The fanaticism was worldwide. The match was seen as a Cold War event, with the time out of mind chess-ruling Russian bear vanquished.

Arguably the best known man on the planet at his triumphant peak, Bobby is later seen in this account riding buses in Los Angeles, able to pay his rent in a dump of an apartment only because his mother sent him her social-security checks. The details of all this are stranger than fiction, as is nearly everything in the life of this much-rewarded, much-tortured genius.

I liked him immensely, knowing only the tall, broad-shouldered, athletically strong and handsome six-foot-something articulate and yes, witty, youth that Bobby was before the evil times set in, with deranged anti-Semitic outbursts and other mental strangeness preceding his too early end at age 64.

I can't ever forget the moment on the show when in amiable conversation I asked him what, in chess, corresponded to the thrill in another sort of event; like, say, hitting a homer in baseball. He said it was the moment when you "break the other guy's ego." There was a shocked murmur from the audience and the quote went around the world.

Frank Brady's *Endgame* is one of those books that makes you want your dinner guests to go the hell home so you can get back to it.

From [Booklist](#)

Brady's insightful biography of the legendary chess player focuses more on Fischer's life as a chess champion than on his much-publicized legal troubles and alleged psychological breakdowns. Brady first became friends with Fischer at a chess tournament when they were both children, and he combines a traditional biography with a personal memoir. Fischer began playing chess at age six and was soon playing games by himself, unable to find worthy competition. He seems to have had a lifelong battle with himself, and his biggest challenge may have been conquering not his competitors but his own intellect. Brady is uniquely qualified to write this book. Not only is he a seasoned biographer and someone who knew Fischer on a personal level; he's also an accomplished chess player himself, able to convey the game's intricacies to the reader in a clear, uncomplicated manner. The book should appeal to a broad audience, from hard-core chess fans to casual players to those who are simply interested in what is a compelling personal story. -- David Pitt

Review

"One the year's best biographies." —*Washington Post*

"Mr. Brady's biography is well-written, studiously researched and filled with fascinating details. It imparts the love of chess and affection for 'Bobby' that the author clearly feels...Boris Spassky, after the losing the world championship title to Fischer, said: 'I think I understand him.' Perhaps one day the rest of us will too.

Until then, we have *Endgame* to fill the void." —*Wall Street Journal*

"The freakishly talented, freakishly flawed Fischer played the game as if it were a blood sport...In *ENDGAME* Frank Brady tells the story of Fischer's life with a dramatic flair and a sense of judiciousness."

—The Boston Globe

"Brady's book is an impressive balancing act and a great accomplishment...What results is a chance for the reader to weigh up the evidence and come to his own conclusions -- or skip judgments completely and simply enjoy reading a rise-and-fall story that has more than a few affinities with Greek tragedy." —*The New York Review of Books*

"Presents Fischer's story with an almost Olympian evenhandedness that ends up making it far more absorbing than any sensationalized account."

—Laura Miller, Salon.com

"Brady is in a unique position to write about Fischer...he had access to new materials, including files from the FBI and the K.G.B. (which identified Fischer as a threat to Soviet chess hegemony in the mid-1980s); the personal archives of Fischer's mother, Regina, and his mentor and coach Jack Collins; and even an autobiographical essay written by the teenage Fischer. The wealth of material allows Brady to describe many rich moments and details."

—New York Times Book Review

"Brady seems unusually well qualified to capture Fischer's many facets and contradictions...**ENDGAME is a rapt, intimate book, greatly helped by Brady's acquaintance with Fischer...**he sees the person behind the bluster...he also makes use of unusually good source material...**fascinating.**"

—*New York Times*

"Even if you don't give a damn about chess, or Bobby Fischer, you'll find yourself engrossed ...has the arc of a Greek tragedy --with a grim touch of mad King Lear at the end...ENDGAME is one of those books that makes you want your dinner guests to go the hell home so you can get back to it."

—Dick Cavett

"Recommended not just for chess enthusiasts but for anyone interested in the compelling compelling life of a complex, enigmatic, American icon." —*Library Journal*

"Brady masters Endgame." —*Vanity Fair*

"Insightful...Brady is uniquely qualified to write this...The book should appeal to a broad audience, from hard-core chess fans to casual players to those who are simply interested in what is a compelling personal story."

—*Booklist*

"Engrossing...The Mozart of the chessboard is inseparable from the monster of paranoid egotism in this fascinating biography...**Brady gives us a tragic narrative of a life that became a chess game."**

—*Publishers Weekly* (Pick of the Week/Starred Review)

"The teenage prodigy, the eccentric champion, the irascible anti-Semite, the genius, the pathetic paranoid—these and other Bobby Fischers strut and fret their hour upon celebrity's stage....Informed,

thorough, sympathetic and surpassingly sad.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"ENDGAME is rich in detail and insight. It is sympathetic and human, but not at all naive. I admire Brady's resolve, and I consider this book essential reading in the effort to understand Bobby Fischer and his place in our world."

—David Shenk, author of *THE GENIUS IN ALL OF US* and *THE IMMORTAL GAME*

"The definitive portrait of the greatest—and most disturbed—chess genius of all time."

—Paul Hoffman, author of *THE MAN WHO LOVED ONLY NUMBERS* and *KING'S GAMBIT*

"Bobby Fischer began life as a lonely prodigy and ended it as a hate-spewing enigma, and in between became America's greatest chess player, a man renowned both for his unmatched brilliance and social clumsiness. In ENDGAME, Frank Brady masterfully chronicles the full breadth of Fischer's life, producing a narrative driven by staggering detail and profound insight into the psyche of a troubled genius."

—Wayne Coffey, New York Times bestselling author of *THE BOYS OF WINTER*

"You don't have to know the game of chess to be mesmerized by the dizzying and ultimately dark journey of the world's most heralded player. Frank Brady has researched and detailed Bobby Fischer's every move—on and off the chessboard—for an incisive and objective account of a man whose genius was matched by his eccentricities. This is a riveting look at a tarnished American icon."

—Pat H. Broeske, New York Times bestselling co-author of *HOWARD HUGHES: THE UNTOLD STORY*

"I've wondered about the weird and fascinating life of Bobby Fischer since I was a teen-aged New York Times copyboy sent out to the lobby to keep Fischer's mother from pestering editors and reporters. Finally, after 50 years, I've finally gotten the weird and fascinating biography I've been waiting for. Bravo, Brady."

—Robert Lipsyte, author of *AN ACCIDENTAL SPORTSWRITER*

"A definitive and finely detailed chronicle of one of the most fascinating and eccentric Americans of the 20th century, written by one of the few men with the expertise, knowledge and writing ability to pull it off in a manner deserving of the subject."

—Michael Weinreb, author of *THE KINGS OF NEW YORK*

"Fischer is America's greatest antihero. This fascinating biography is filled with hope, Cold War intrigue, the fulfillment of genius, and an explosive fall from grace that is both deeply moving and, ultimately, profoundly sad."

—Jeremy Silman, author of *THE AMATEUR'S MIND*

"I have been following Bobby Fischer my whole life, but I learned something new on nearly every page of this wonderful book. Frank Brady is the perfect biographer for Bobby Fischer, and ENDGAME tells the full and fair story of Fischer's astonishing rise and heartbreaking fall."

—Christopher Chabris, author of *THE INVISIBLE GORILLA*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eva Ammons:

This book untitled Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall - from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness to be one of several books that best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this reserve you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book store or you can order it via online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you more readily to read this book, as you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason to you to past this book from your list.

Leon Fisher:

Spent a free the perfect time to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or their own friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic inside park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Would you like to something different to fill your own free time/ holiday? May be reading a book is usually option to fill your cost-free time/ holiday. The first thing that you ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the publication untitled Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall - from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness can be great book to read. May be it is usually best activity to you.

Jeffery Herring:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always make an effort to and must have the time or they will get wide range of stress from both daily life and work. So , once we ask do people have time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we consult again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to you actually of course your answer will unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading guides. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, typically the book you have read is Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall - from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness.

Robin Castillo:

Are you kind of stressful person, only have 10 or perhaps 15 minute in your morning to upgrading your mind expertise or thinking skill perhaps analytical thinking? Then you have problem with the book in comparison with can satisfy your short space of time to read it because all of this time you only find publication that need more time to be read. Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall - from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness can be your answer as it can be read by a person who have those short extra time problems.

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