

# NM Chess Champions – Max Wilkerson

Max Wilkerson won the New Mexico Championship in 1959, though he spent most of his life in the San Francisco Bay area. He was for a long time the Director of the Mechanics Institute Chess Club in San Francisco and they hold an annual tournament in his honor.

His opponent, future World Champion Bobby Fischer, was coming off of his amazing 11-0 victory in the 1963-4 U.S. Championship. This game was played during Fischer's simultaneous exhibition tour in 1964. Okay, Fischer was giving a simultaneous, but I can't find any other game in which a New Mexico Champion even PLAYED a World Champion, let alone won!

In spite of Max's unusual defense, he held equality coming out of the opening. But then Max starts to drift allowing Bobby to win a pawn. It appears that Bobby is headed for a routine win when he makes an horrendous blunder. Bobby plays on, but Max plays solidly to bring home the point.

**Bobby Fischer – Max Wilkerson, 0:1**  
**Fischer Simultaneous Exhibition**  
**San Francisco, April 1964**

## Center Counter Defense

**1. e4 d5!?** The Center Counter Defense. Not bad, but not that great either. I suspect Max was attempting to throw off his illustrious opponent. **2. exd5 Nf6** He plays a gambit rather than allow his queen to be attacked.

[2... Qxd5 **3. Nc3 Qa5 4. d4** White has the better game due to his better center and the awkward placement of Black's queen]

**3. c4 c6 4. d4** But Fischer declines the gambit to avoid getting behind in development.

[4. dxc6 Nxc6 **5. Nf3 e5 6. d3 Bc5** Black has enough for the pawn because of his better development and White's backward d-pawn]

**4... cxd5 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. c5!?** This time wasting move takes the pressure off of the center and gives Black the chance to seize the initiative. **6... e6!?**

[6... e5! **7. dxe5 Ng4 8. Qxd5 Be6 9. Qxd8 Rxd8** Black has a big lead in development and must win back at least one of the two pawns. **10. Bg5 Bxc5 11. Bxd8 Bxf2 12. Kd1 Kxd8 13. Nf3 Bb6 14. Bb5 Nf2 15. Ke2 Nxb1 16. Rxh1 Nd4 17. Kd3 Nxb5 18. Nxb5 Ke7 19. Nbd4 Rd8 20. b3 g5 21. h3 h5 22. Ke4 Bd5 23. Kf5 Bxd4 24. Nxd4 Bxg2 25. Rh2 Bxh3 26. Rxh3 Rxd4 27. Rxh5 Rd2 28. Rh8 g4 29. Rb8 g3 30. Rxb7 Kf8 31. Rb8 Kg7 32. Rb4 Rf2 33. Kg5 g2 34. Rg4 Rxa2 35. Kf5 Kf8 36. Rg3 Ke7 37. Kg4 Rb2 38. Kf5 Kd7 39. Rg5 a5 40. Rg4 Rf2 41. Ke4 Ke6 42. Rg8 Re2 43. Kd3 Rb2 44. Kc3 Rf2 45. Kd4 Kf5 46. Ke3 Rb2 47. Kd4 Rd2 48. Ke3 Ra2 49. Kd4 a4 50. bxa4 Rxa4 51. Ke3 Rg4 52. Rxg4 Kxg4 53. Kf2 Kf5** 0-1, Barle Janez (SLO) 2415 - Fridman Daniel (GER) 2650, Rijeka

(Croatia) 2010.03.06]

**7. Bb5 Be7 8. Nf3 O-O 9. Bxc6**

[In another game from the same tour Fischer wins with 9. O-O Bd7 10. Bf4 Ne4 11. Rc1 f5 12. Bxc6 Bxc6 13. Ne5 Qe8 14. f3 Nxc3 15. Rxc3 Bf6 16. Re1 g5 17. Nxc6 Qxc6 18. Be5 Qd7 19. b4 a5 20. b5 Qxb5 21. Rb3 Qd7 22. Qb1 Bxe5 23. Rxe5 Rf7 24. Rb6 Re7 25. Qb3 a4 26. Qe3 Kf7 27. Qxg5 Ra6 28. Rxa6 bxa6 29. g4 Re8 30. gxf5 Qd8 31. fxe6 1-0, Fischer Robert J (USA) 2780 - Von Oettingen S, 1964 Simultaneous]

**9... bxc6 10. O-O a5 11. Bf4N Ra6!?** A peculiar move. Obviously the bishop belongs here.

[11... Ba6 12. Re1 Nh5 13. Bd2 Qc7 14. Ne5 Nf6 15. Qa4 Rfc8 Because White now has firm control of e5 Black is cramped, but his position is solid]

**12. Re1 Nd7 13. Na4 Re8 14. Ne5 Nxe5 15. Bxe5 Bf8** Max works to undermine White's center by playing for f6 and e5. **16. Nb6 f6 17. Bg3 e5 18. dxe5 Bxc5!?** But this takes a good thing a little too far.

[18... fxe5 19. Nxc8 Qxc8 20. Bxe5 Bxc5 Black's backward c-pawn and awkwardly placed rook on a6 give White the better game]

**19. Nxc8 fxe5?!** Now he loses a pawn.

[A little better is 19... Qxc8 20. exf6 Rxe1 21. Qxe1 gxf6 22. Qc3 though Black's position is weak and disorganized]

**20. Rc1 Bb4 21. Rxe5 Qxc8**

**22. Rxd5??** This is a good idea, but the wrong move order.

[22. a3! Kicking the bishop so it no longer covers e1. 22... Rxe5 (22... Bf8 23. Rxd5! Now this works! 23... cxd5 24. Rxc8 Rxc8 25. Qxd5 Kh8 26. h3 With a queen and two pawns for two rooks, White wins) 23. Bxe5 Be7 24. Qxd5! Anyway. 24... cxd5 25. Rxc8 White is a clear pawn up]

**22... Re1!** This is why the bishop needed to be booted. **23. Qxe1 Bxe1** Bobby struggles on hoping for a miracle, but Max doesn't give him a chance. **24. Bh4** Maybe he will fall for the same trick. **24... Qe6** Maybe not. **25. Rd8 Kf7 26. Rcd1 Ra7 27. a3 c5 28. R1d3 Bd2 29. g3 g5 30. Rxd2 gxh4** Fischer resigns. [0:1]

Matt Grinberg, 2/17/2016