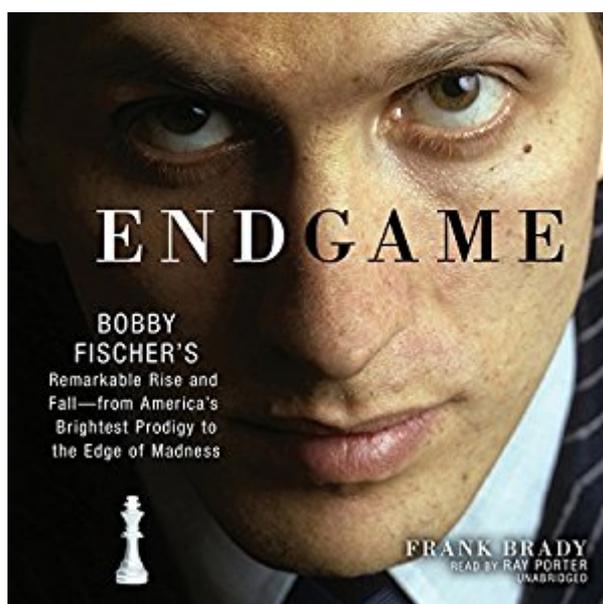


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Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise And Fall—from America's Brightest Prodigy To The Edge Of Madness



Synopsis

From Frank Brady, who wrote one of the best-selling books on Bobby Fischer of all time and who was himself a friend of Fischer's, comes an impressively researched biography that for the first time completely captures the remarkable arc of Bobby Fischer's life. When Bobby Fischer passed away in January 2008, he left behind a confounding legacy. Everyone knew the basics of his life—he began as a brilliant youngster, then became the pride of American chess, then took a sharp turn, struggling with paranoia and mental illness. But nobody truly understood him. What motivated Fischer from such a young age, and what was the source of his remarkable intellect? How could a man so ambivalent about money and fame be so driven to succeed? What drew this man of Jewish descent to fulminate against Jews, and how was it that a mind so famously disciplined could unravel so completely? From Fischer's meteoric rise, to an utterly dominant prime unequalled by any American chess player, to his eventual descent into madness, the book draws upon hundreds of newly discovered documents and recordings and numerous firsthand interviews conducted with those who knew Fischer best. It paints, for the very first time, a complete picture of one of America's most enigmatic icons. This is the definitive account of a fascinating man and an extraordinary life, one that at last reconciles Fischer's deeply contradictory legacy and answers the question, who was Bobby Fischer?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This well detailed biography begins with Fischer near his final years, a fugitive from the law, wanted

in America for sanction violations (playing chess in the former Yugoslav republic in 1992) and a marked man for his hate-filled rant on the radio after September 11. The Japanese authorities have captured Fischer at the airport and have put a sack over his head while he throws a tantrum. From this disturbing scene, we shoot back to Fischer's childhood during the McCarthy Era in which his mother, who lived in Russia and was involved in Leftist political activities, is investigated by the FBI. Fischer as a child with a genius IQ of 180 becomes obsessed with chess and is soon hailed as a prodigy beating adults around the world, including US's rival, Russia. As Fischer becomes more and more prominent, Brady captures the demons that begin to consume Fischer: He becomes more and more anti-Semitic though he himself is a Jew, he becomes a hypochondriac, a paranoid malcontent, and a grouch who cannot elicit the reader's sympathy, at least for me. Brady takes us to Fischer's final years in Iceland (the only country that would host him after he renounced his US citizenship and became a wanted man by Interpol all over the world), referred to as a "devil's island," a place where Fischer must spend the rest of his life. We get the picture of a broken man with no will to live, mildly consoled by eating at restaurants 3 times a day and refusing medical treatment for his urinary tract and weakened kidneys. Growing up in the 1970s and taking pride in Fischer's domination over the Soviets, I found this a bracing read, a portrait of a man too smart for his own good and too delusional. Highly recommended for those who want a biography that neither praises nor condemns Fischer as much as it gives us a lucid portrait of him.

Bobby Fischer was someone who used to turn up in the news every now and then in some remarkable way, and then disappear for years; this book fills in the gaps. I played a lot of chess in college, in the late fifties, and remember reading about Bobby Fischer then and thinking that he would revolutionize the game. Then in 1972, he really did, with the Fischer-Spassky match triggering the chess mania that swept the country and got me to dust off my old set. Then... silence, except for occasional weird news: he's on skid row; he's been arrested; he's spewing anti-Semitism. This book is a fascinating account of what happened in between these flashes of news and succeeds in explaining what Fischer was all about. You don't have to be a chess fan to enjoy it (or even know the moves). It's easy, vivid reading, and kept me up beyond my bedtime. It's full of all sorts of interesting details: where his strange religious and political views came from; the files the FBI had on him and his mother; whether he was circumcised (!); the fact that he was Russell Targ's brother-in-law. The author certainly knows his subject. Fischer was one of the most extreme "outliers" of his generation: totally brilliant, tragically self-destructive, utterly ungrateful, but thoroughly captivating. Whether you remember Fischer or not, you'll enjoy this book as a character

study of an amazing figure.

Brady has written a compelling biography of Bobby Fischer, who disappeared from the public stage after winning the world championship in chess. You don't have to know anything about chess to appreciate the book, which is about the man and not the game. Some features of Fischer's personality emerge from the book. First, he was apparently unable to understand that business agreements require that both sides get something from the deal. He believed that if other people profited at all from his activities, then they were taking advantage of him. As a result, he walked away from over ten million dollars in business opportunities after winning the world championship. It's tempting to say that this view reflects the zero-sum nature of chess, and his own playing style, which sought victories and not draws. Second, there was a healthy dose of paranoia in Fischer's makeup. He was convinced that the Soviet Union, and later the United States government, were out to get him, as were the world's Jews. Of course, paranoids can have real enemies - - the Soviet chess establishment did collude to try to keep the title in their community, and the U.S. government did go after him for violating international sanctions against Yugoslavia. Fischer's anti-Semitic paranoia seems purely irrational. Third, I was amazed at how much loyalty Fischer could command from his friends despite treating them poorly and discarding them all too easily. Brady does not convey exactly why people put up with this treatment, even though Brady was a sometimes friend of Fischer himself. I suspect that hero worship helps explain why people tolerated mistreatment in order to remain close to such a gifted chess player. Brady himself remains surprisingly loyal despite having been estranged from Fischer for many years. He characterizes the man but does not judge him as a person. He does judge Fischer as a chess grandmaster, who was probably the greatest ever to play the game. This is not the book for studying his games, but it's an insightful and fast-paced biography of a difficult human being.

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