

**DAVID BRONSTEIN:**  
**Fifty Great Short Games**

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**International Master**  
**Nikolay Minev**

**The Chess Library**  
**Seattle, Washington**

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## CONTENTS

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	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A00-A99.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>B00-B99.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>C00-C99.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>D00-D99.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>E00-E99.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Indices.....</b>	<b>95</b>



# DAVID BRONSTEIN (1924 – 2006)

## His 50 Great Short Stories

Selected and annotated by IM Nikolay Minev

*“It is my style to take my opponent and myself onto unknown grounds. A game of chess is not an examination of knowledge, it is a battle of nerves.” - David Bronstein.*

With the December 5, 2006 death of Grandmaster David Bronstein, the chess world lost one of its greatest creative forces. Only rarely does a player of his insight and ability appear.

David Ionovich Bronstein was born in the Ukraine, on February 19, 1924. He learned chess early and responded well to the training opportunities he received. As a youth, he had some early successes, but it was in the years immediately following World War II that his talent began to shine most strongly.

Although there was at the time no formal rating system, he was undoubtedly one of the ten strongest players in the world between the years of 1945 and 1959. He won the Soviet championship tournaments in both 1948 and 1949, the Saltsjobaden Interzonal 1948, and the Budapest Candidates Tournament 1950. He played versus then-world champion Mikhail Botvinnik for the world title in 1951, but a 12-12 result allowed Botvinnik to retain the crown.

He never again achieved that same level of success, but continued to be among the top players in the world for many years, winning many international tournaments, performing nearly flawlessly for the USSR Olympiad team, and leaving a legacy of courageous opening experimentation, innovative tactical ideas, and unique strategic plans.

His games demonstrate this fully. He played bold, competitive chess,

and was undaunted by any opponent. He was an innovator who experimented even when the results mattered, and who was willing to try almost anything.

His play has been characterized as “intuitive”, yet his games are not whimsical or unfounded. Instead, they demonstrate the workings of a creative, ingenious mind, open to fantasy, imagination, and exploration of the unknown.

In the collection of games that follow, you will see fifty games in which Bronstein’s victory comes in 24 moves or less. Being short, they definitely contain mistakes by his opponents. Yet, his ability to set up the situation where the error is possible, and his ability to execute after the mistake, make the games remarkable and worthy of study. Some of these games are gems. Almost all contain something interesting in the opening, an idea for further exploration. All are worthy to be seen.

His play influenced an entire generation of chess players. I hope that you too, will be taken under his spell!

International Master Nikolay Minev

## Bronstein on Bronstein

*“When I play chess...I always try to vary my openings as much as possible, to invent new plans in attack and defense, to make experimental moves which are dangerous and exciting for both players and also for the audience. I believe that my greatest quality in the chess world is that I have never played routine games. I judge the position again and again before every move, changing my strategy in reply to my opponent’s moves, if necessary. Even in great time-trouble I never have any fear and bravely create combinations, sometimes good, sometimes risky. Probably if I were to play more safely I would make more points in every tournament but then, where is the joy in that?” (Sorcerer’s Apprentice, Bronstein and Furstenberg, Cadogan 1995, p. 18)*

*“I cannot say what feeling an artist experiences in front of an empty canvas but whenever I have to start a game I cannot stop thinking that today, right now, I have the very fortunate possibility of playing the most beautiful, the most fighting and the most profound game. It is now more than 50 years that I have been coming regularly to the Sacred Hall of Chess Creativity and have reverently sent a white pawn forward with a prayer to heroic feats. I am tormented, given no rest and am cut to pieces by that eternal sword of Damocles known to generations of chess players: the question of how to begin the attack...” (Sorcerer’s Apprentice p. 266).*

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**[1]                    Bronstein D. – Albur L.                    A05**  
**USSR championship**  
**Baku 1972**

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**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 b5 3.Bg2 Bb7 4.O-O c5 5.d3 e6 6.e4 d6**

The alternative 6...d5 is a more appropriate reply.

**7.a4 b4**

This gives up the c4-square. 7...a6!? is worthy of consideration.

**8.Nbd2 Nfd7**

This looks artificial but probably is necessary. I suppose that in case of the routine 8...Nc6, Black does not like the position after 9.e5!? Nxe5 10.Nxe5 Bxg2 11.Nxf7 Kxf7 12.Kxg2.

**9.Nc4 Nc6 10.Bg5! Qc7**

If 10...Be7?? 11.Nxd6+ and 10...f6 looks ugly.

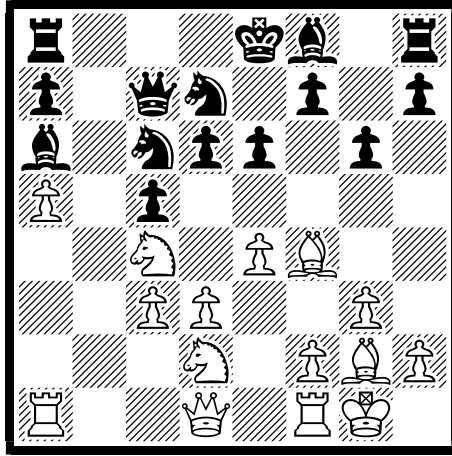
**11.Nfd2 g6?! 12.Bf4 Nd4?**

I have no explanation for this move, which is not only waste of time, but also improves White's position. A better try is 12...Nde5.

**13.c3 bxc3 14.bxc3 Nc6 15.a5! Ba6?!**

Probably Black should play 15...a6 or 15...Rd8.





### 16.e5! d5

A relatively better choice is 16...dxe5 17.Nxe5 Ndx5 18.Bxe5 Nxe5 19.Bxa8 Bg7 with some counter play for the lost exchange.

### 17.Bxd5! exd5 18.e6 Nde5

This loses immediately, but already there is no adequate defense. For example 18...Qd8 19.exd7+ Qxd7 20.Re1+ and now: 20...Be7 21.Nd6+ 22.Kf8 23.Qf3! Bxd6 24.Qxd5 Rd8 25.Bh6+ Kg8 26.Ne4 Be7 27.Qxd7 Rxd7 28.Nf6+! Bxf6 29.Re8#, or 20....Kd8 21.Qf3!? (21.Ne5!? Nxe5 22.Bxe5 Rg8 23.Qf3) 21...dxc4 22.Rad1 and White's strong attack should succeed..

### 19.Nxe5 Nxe5 20.Bxe5 1-0

Because of 20...Qxe5 21.Qa4+ Ke7 22.Qd7+ Kf6 23.Qxf7+ and White wins.

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[2]

**Bronstein D. – Uhlmann W.**  
**Moscow 1971**

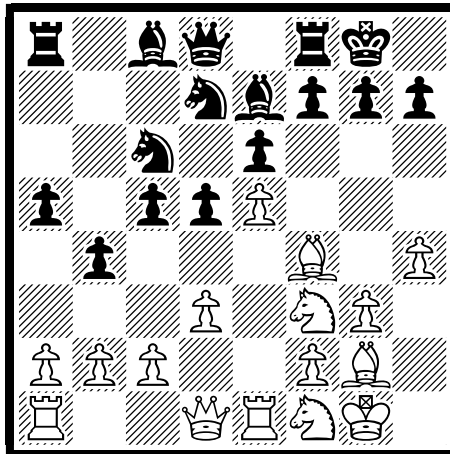
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**A08**

**1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 Nf6 4.Ngf3 c5 5.g3 Nc6 6.Bg2 Be7 7.O-O O-O 8.Re1 b5**

A favorite continuation of Uhlmann's, even though it didn't serve him very well. Black's plan is for initiative on the Queenside by moving the pawns, but this consumes too much time. Often used in practice is 8...b6, followed by 9...Bb7 or 9...Ba6, while GM Kotov recommends 8...dxe4!?.

**9.e5 Nd7 10.Nf1 a5 11 .h4! b4 12.Bf4**



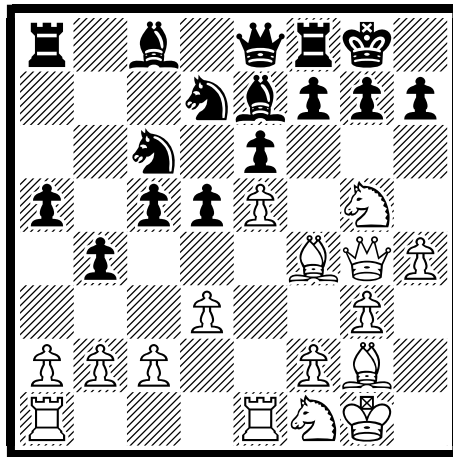
**12...Ba6**

According to Kotov, the correct defense is 12...Re8, and if 13.Ng5 Nf8

**13.Ng5 Qe8**

Here 13...Re8 fails to 14.Qh5.

**14.Qg4!**



**14...a4??**

Unfortunately because of this fatal mistake, the game ends early and we are deprived of seeing the struggle develop further. In his book “Ein Leben Lang Franzosisch” Uhlmann only suggests that Black should play 14...Kh8, but refrains from any assessment or further continuations. This is a rich field for further analysis!

**15.Nxe6 1-0**

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**[3] Bronstein D. – Dzindzichashvili R. A08**  
**USSR championship**  
**Baku 1972**

---

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d3 Nc6 4.g3 d5 5.Qe2**

Usual is 5.Nbd2.

**5...Nf6 6.Bg2 Be7 7.O-O O-O**

This position can also be reached from the French Defense Chigorin (1.e4 e6 2.Qe2 C00).

**8.e5 Nd7 9.c4!**

This continuation is considered one of the best.

**9...Nb6**

The tempting 9...dxc4 10.dxc4 Nd4 is in Whites favor after 11.Qe4.

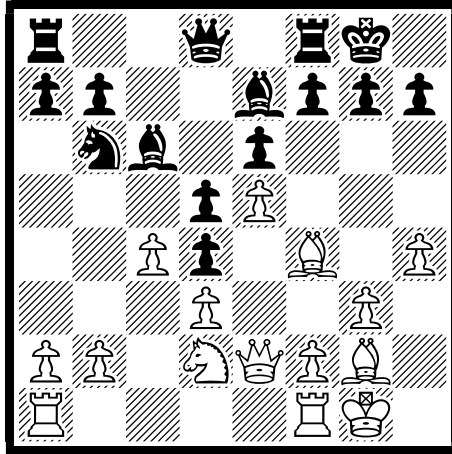
**10.Bf4 Bd7?!**

Maybe Black should try 10...f5!? or 10...f6!?

**11.h4 Nd4?**

Here again 11...f5!? or 11...f6!? are probably better options.

**12.Nxd4 cxd4 13.Nd2 Bc6**



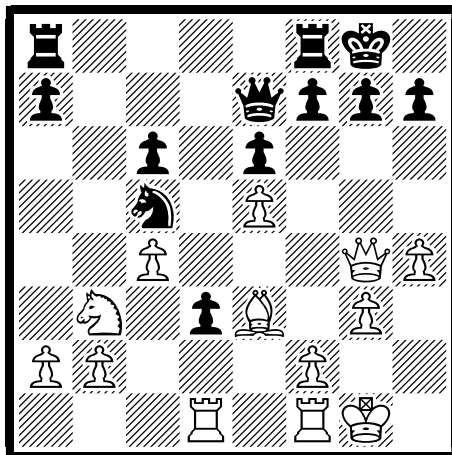
**14.Rad1!**

A very difficult move! The threat is 15.Nb3, Black has no defense.

**14...Na4 15.Nb3 dxc4**

No better is 15...Qb6 16.cxd5 Bxd5 17.Bxd5 exd5 18.Rc1 Rac8 19. Qg4, with a clear advantage to White – Baranov..

**16.dxc4 Bc5 17.Bxc6 bxc6 18.Nxc5 Nxc5 19.Be3 d3 20.Qg4 Qe7**



**21.Bg5! 1-0**

For if 21...Qc7 22.Bf6 g6 23.Qg5 and 24.Qh6.

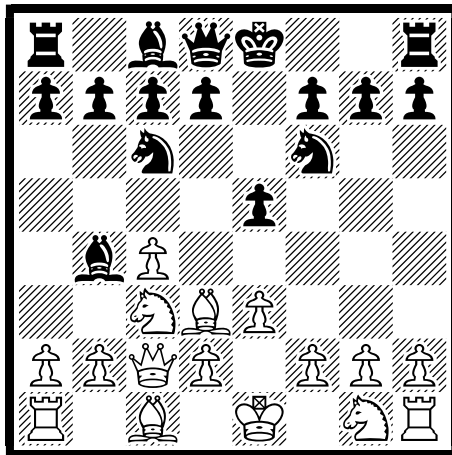
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**[4] Bronstein D. - Computer Kallisto A21**  
**AEGON**  
**The Hague 1995**

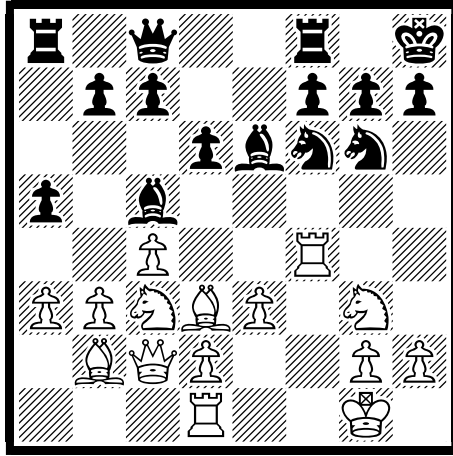
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*Bronstein's results playing against computers were almost 100%. Here is one of his victorious games, played in an official tournament. If nothing else, pay attention of Bronstein's winning strategy: playing for a closed position with many pawns on the board, and playing unusual moves unlikely to be part of the computer's prepared "library" (e.g. 5.Bd3).*

**1.c4 Nf6 2.e3 e5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 Nc6 5.Bd3!?**



5...d6 6.Nge2 Be6 7.O-O a5 8.a3 Bc5 9.b3 O-O 10.Bb2 Kh8 11.  
 Rad1 Qc8 12.Ng3 Ne7 13.f4 exf4 14.Rxf4 Ng6?



15.Rxf6! gxf6 16.Nce4 a4 17.b4 Ba7 18.Nxf6 Kg7 19.Ngh5+ Kh6  
 20.Rf1 Rd8 21.Bf5 Bb6 22.Qe4 d5 23.cxd5 1-0

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[5] **Bronstein D. – Pangrazzi M.** **A52**  
**Rome 1990**

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1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 Ng4 4.Bf4 g5

The sharpest, most risky continuation. That's not the smartest idea when your opponent is one of the top tacticians in the world. Better options available are 4...Bb4+, 4...Nc6 and 4...f6.

5.Bd2! Nxe5 6.Bc3 Bg7 7.e3 g4 8.Ne2!

This maneuver gives White the advantage.

**8...d6 9.Nf4 Nbc6**

9...h5!? is a relatively better reply.

**10.Nh5! Bh6 11.Nd2 Bf5 12.Ng3 Qd7**

Also 12...Bg6 13.h3 gxh3 14.Rxh3 is in White's favor.

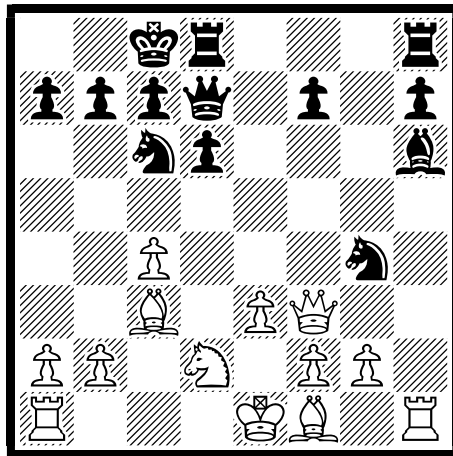
**13.h3! O-O-O**

If 13...gxh3? then 14.Qh5 wins a piece.

**14.Nxf5 Qxf5 15.hxg4 Nxg4 16.Qf3!**

The refutation of Black's tactical defense. Now White wins material.

**16...Qd7**



**17.Rxh6! Nxh6 18.Bxh8 Rxh8 19.Qf6 1-0**



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[6]

**Mikenas V. – Bronstein D.**  
**USSR championship**  
**Tallin 1965**

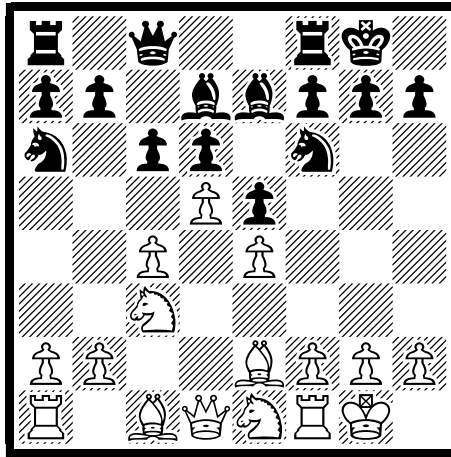
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**A53**

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 d6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e4 e5 5.d5**

According to theory, White gains nothing by 5.dxe5 dxe5 6.Qxd8+ Kd8.

**5...Be7 6.Be2 O-O 7.Nf3 Na6 8.O-O Bd7 9.Ne1 Qc8!?**



An extraordinary and original strategic idea from the genius of David Bronstein. The concept is to transfer the passive dark-square Bishop to a more active position on the b6-square. A pattern of maneuvering such as this one is worth remembering!

**10.Nd3 Bd8 11.f4 cxd5 12.cxd5 Nc5 13.fxe5 Nfxe4 14.Nxe4 Nxe4**

**15.Be3 Bb6 16.Bxb6 axb6 17.Rf4 Nc5 18.exd6 Nxd3 19.Qxd3 Qc5+ 20.Kh1 Qxd6 21.Rh4 h6 22.a3 Rfe8 23.Bf3**

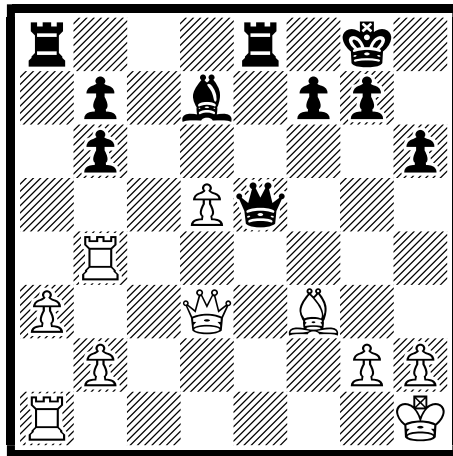
At first glance the position looks about equal. However, this impression is an illusion. In fact, White must be very careful because he has some problems with the weak first rank and the poor coordination of his pieces.

**23...Qe5!**

A very sly move. The double threat includes 24...Qxb2, sniping a pawn and 24...Qe1+ 25.Qf1 Qxh4, snaring a Rook. Against the natural reply played in the game, Black has a staggeringly diabolical continuation.

**24.Rb4?**

White attempts to play against Black's doubled pawns. But the obvious move is not always the right one! The only correct defense was 24.Rd4!



**24...Rxa3!! 0-1**

The variations behind this surprising capture are quite simple: 25. bxa3 Qxa1+ or 25.Qxa3 (25.Rxa3) Qe1+, in all cases with a mate on the first rank. But to foresee and create tactical possibilities is only within the power of the player who is highly skilled and well educated in tactics.

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**[7]                      Bronstein D. - Rytov                      B10**  
**Tallin 1979**

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**1.e4 c6 2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 g6 4.Ngf3 Bg7 5.g3 Nf6**

A very popular continuation in recent tournament practice is 5...e5.

**6.Bg2 O-O 7.O-O a5 8.e5 Ng4**

It seems that 8...Ne8 9.d4 Na6 is reasonable, and probably a better alternative.

**9.d4 f6 10.exf6 exf6 11.c4! dxc4**

According to Hartston, Black should play 11...Kh8. Already White stands slightly better.

**12.Nxc4 b5?!**

This creates positional weaknesses. Correct is 12...Be6.

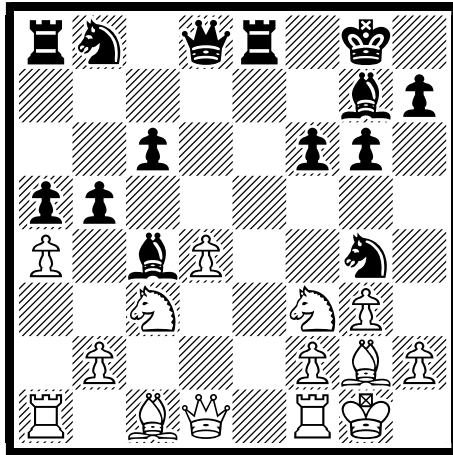
**13.Ncd2 Re8 14.a4! Be6**

14...b4!?

**15.Ne4 Bd5**

Perhaps Black should try 15...Ra7!?

**16.Nc3 Bc4**



**17.axb5!?**

The point behind this surprising sacrifice of an exchange is Black's unprotected Rook and Knight. White also achieves an initiative over the weakened light squares. Some call this kind of combination "intuitive".

**17...Bxf1**

If 17...cxb5 18.Nxb5 Bxb5? 19.Qb3+ and 20.Qxb5.

**18.Bxf1 cxb5 19.Bxb5 Rf8 20.Qe2 Kh8?**

A blunder that loses instantly. Hartston claims that after 20...Nh6!?

the position is unclear. This assessment is probably correct, but