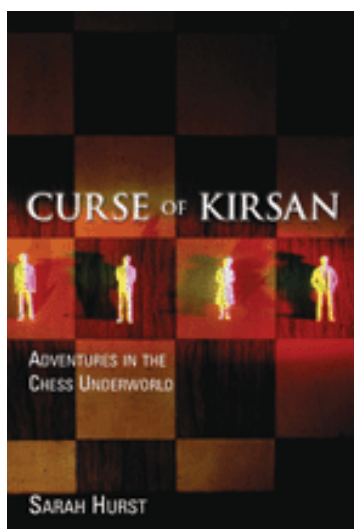




C O L U M N I S T S

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



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Women Take Center Stage in Bled

The 35th Chess Olympiad in Bled, Slovenia was one of the more exciting events in 2002. Yes, I know that Kasparov dominated his opponents with a 2933 performance and the Russian Men's team walked away with the gold. But there is nothing new with or unusual about Kasparov's performance. We always expect only the best from one of the greatest world champions. The #1 seed Russian team with an average rating of 2727+ winning the gold is hardly what I would call a headline. It would be if they failed to get the gold.

In my opinion, it was the women that ruled the exciting and dramatic headlines in Bled. The following are my top 5 most memorable storylines in Bled.

(1) The sensational start by the US Women's team

With 2 young stars (Irina Krush and Jennifer Shahade) and 2 veterans (Elena Donaldson and Camilla Baginskaite), the American women defeated the #2 seed Georgia, the #7 seed Yugoslavia, and the #1 seed and eventual gold medallists China in rounds 3, 4 and 5. That was a superb performance by the American women. In fact, they were the front-runners and stayed in contention for a while. Even though they did not get a medal, it was definitely for lack of effort. Something tells me that 2004 could even be better for the US Women's team.

(2) The wonderful performance by the Georgian women until round 10 and their stunning and inexplicable collapse in the last 4 rounds

After a shocking loss to the US Women's team in round 3, the Georgian women bounced back in a big way. Chiburdanidze, the former Women's World Champion, led the Georgian's wonderful comeback from rounds 4 through 10. After 10 rounds, the Georgians were leading the defending champions from China by 3 full points with only 4 rounds to go. At that point, it seemed as if the the Georgian team was on its way to recapturing the gold which had belonged to China in the last 2 Olympiads.

Then, all of a sudden, for some unknown reason, the very experienced Georgian team completely collapsed. They managed to score only one-half point against the #9 seed Poland in round 11, 1 point against the #14 seed Vietnam in round 12, 1 point against the #5 seed Bulgaria in round 13 and



1 point against the #7 seed Yugoslavia in the last round. That is a total of 3½ points in the last 12 games, taking them from 3 points ahead of China to a place out of medal contention.

I am not completely sure, but in my opinion, this has to be one of the biggest collapses of any team in the history of the chess olympiad. What was more shocking was that the Georgian team was not an unknown or inexperienced team. They were led by 3 world-class veteran competitors: Chiburdanidze, Ioseliani and Arakhamia-Grant. I guess Yogi Berra was right: “It is not over till it’s over”.

(3) The marvelous comeback by the Chinese Women to win the Gold by a half-point

Before I talk about the performance of the Chinese team, let me take this opportunity to congratulate Women’s World Champion Xie Jun for the birth of her newborn daughter on October 5th. I would like to wish her, her daughter and her family all the best. She is a true warrior on the chess board and a formidable opponent. Congratulations!

Even without Xie Jun, the Chinese Women still ranked #1 in Bled, anchored by current Women’s World Champion Zhu Chen and World Cup winner Yuhua Xu. However, it was not the same dominant team as in the past few Olympiads.

After a somewhat lackluster start, the Chinese women found themselves behind the #2 seed and powerhouse Georgia by a large 3-point margin after 10 rounds. No one could ever have predicted the outcome in the last 4 rounds. Held together by pride, confidence, team-work and mental toughness, they scored 8 points in the next 4 rounds against very tough competition (#5 seed Bulgaria in round 11, #4 seed Ukraine in round 12, #16 seed Armenia in round 13 and #6 seed Romania in the last round).

At the end, the Chinese once again brought glory for their nation with the third consecutive team gold medal. What an exciting outcome for the Chinese women. Congratulations for a well deserved gold medal!

(4) The dramatic and exciting last round results to determine all three medals!

Going into the last round, the Chinese, Russian and Georgian teams all had chances for the gold while Poland and Vietnam were still mathematically alive for a medal. Strange things have happened in the last round in the past. This is the true test of nerves.

China, with 27 points, was expected to defeat the tough #5 seed Bulgaria. Russia, with 26½ points, trailed China by only one-half point. They were paired against a much weaker #20 seed, Slovakia, and were expected to win fairly easily. This would give them a chance to catch the Chinese. The

Georgians, also only one-half point behind with $26\frac{1}{2}$ points, were paired against the #7 seed Yugoslavia and they were definitely the favorite in the last round. However, they had to win by a big margin to catch the Chinese. So the \$64,000 question was by what margin would China, Russia and Georgia win? This would determine who got the gold, silver and bronze medals. And let's not forget about all the mumbo-jumbo tie-breaking stuff in case of a tie.

In the meantime, #9 seed Poland, with 25 points (trailing Russia and Georgia by $1\frac{1}{2}$ points and China by 2 points), and the surprising #14 seed Vietnam with $24\frac{1}{2}$ points, were mathematically but not realistically alive for a medal. Neither team was thought to have realistic chances being so far behind the top 3. To make matters worse, they were paired against each other so the chances were that they would cancel each other out.

China, as expected, beat Bulgaria but the score of $2\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ was surprising. This shows you how metally tough they were. Russia, as expected, beat Slovakia $2\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$. But this score failed to catch the Chinese. The Georgians once again stunned the tournament by losing to Yugoslavia by the score of 1-2. So it looked like the final order of standing would be China, Russia and Georgia.

But apparently, the Polish women had the final say. They shocked everyone by soundly defeating the Cinderella Vietnamese team by a perfect 3-0 score, moving them past the Georgians by a half-point for the Bronze! What a finish by the Polish women!

Congratulations to the Chinese, Russian and Polish! That was an exiting and memorable finish!

(5) Judit Polgar's sensational performance anchoring the Hungarian men's team that captured the silver medal

What else can I say about my baby sister Judit? She "officially" played board 2 for the #2 seed Hungarian men's team but in fact, she actually played many games on Board 1. Hungary beat the Russians in their head-to-head encounter, but finished one point behind the powerful Russian team led by World Champion Kasparov and which also included Bareev, Morozevich, Grischuk, Khalifman and Svidler ($2727+$ average rating!) for the Silver.

Judit was also the only Hungarian team member to capture an individual medal, a bronze (behind the American great Yasser Seirawan who got the Silver) with the final score of $8\frac{1}{2}$ /12 (+5) against opposition with an average rating of 2583! Her new rating is expected to be near 2700!

This is quite a year for Judit, defeating Kasparov while playing for the winning World Team against Russia, and now this performance in Bled!

Job well done! Congratulations Judit!

And now 4 games by Irina Krush, Jennifer Shahade, the individual Women's Gold medallist and former World Junior Champion Hoang Thanh Trang of Vietnam and of course my sister Judit.

GM Judit Polgar (2685) – GM Andrei Istratescu (2615) [B15] Olympiad Bled SLO (8), 11-02-2002

1. e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. Nc3 c6 4. f4 d5 5. e5 Nh6 6. Nf3 f6 7. h3 Nf5 8. Bd3 Ng3 9. Rg1 f5 10. Be3 Qb6 11. Qc1 Na6 12. Na4 Qd8 13. Bxa6 Qa5+ 14. Qd2 Qxa6 15. Nc5 Qb6 16. 0–0–0 Qb5 17. Kb1 b6 18. Nd3 Ne4 19. Qe1 Be6 20. Ng5 Kd7 21. g4 Raf8 22. Nxe4 fxe4 23. Nc1 Rf7 24. Ne2 h5 25. f5 gxf5 26. gxh5 f4 27. Nxf4 Bf5 28. b3 e6 29. a4 Qa6 30. Qd2 Qc8 31. Rg3 Bh6



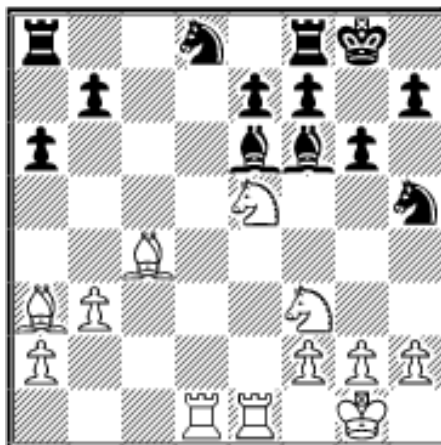
32. Nxd5 cxd5 33. Bxh6 e3 34. Bxe3 Rxh5 35. Qe2 Qc3 36. Bf4 Bxc2+ 37. Qxc2 Qxc2+ 38. Kxc2 Rxf4 39. Rg7+ Ke8 40. Rd3 Rf7 41. Rg8+ Rf8 42. Rxf8+ Kxf8 43. Rc3 Rh4 44. Rc8+ Kf7 45. Rc7+ 45...Kg6 46. Rxa7 Rxd4 47. Rb7 Rb4 48. Kc3 Rh4 49. Rxb6 Kf5 50. a5 Rxh3+

51. Kd4 Rh1 52. Rb8 Rd1+ 53. Kc5 Kxe5 54. a6 Ra1 55. Kb6 Kd4 56. a7 Kc3 57. a8Q Rxa8 58. Rxa8 d4 59.

Kc5 d3 60. b4 d2 61. Ra1 1–0

IM Irina Krush (2403) – GM Antoaneta Stefanova (2541) [D11] Olympiad w Bled SLO (12), 11-07-2002

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. e3 a6 5. Bd3 g6 6. 0–0 Bg7 7. b3 c5 8. Bb2 cxd4 9. exd4 Nc6 10. Nbd2 0–0 11. Re1 Nh5 12. Ne5 dxc4 13. Bxc4 Nxd4 14. Ndf3 Ne6 15. Ba3 Bf6 16. Qxd8 Nxd8 17. Rad1 Be6

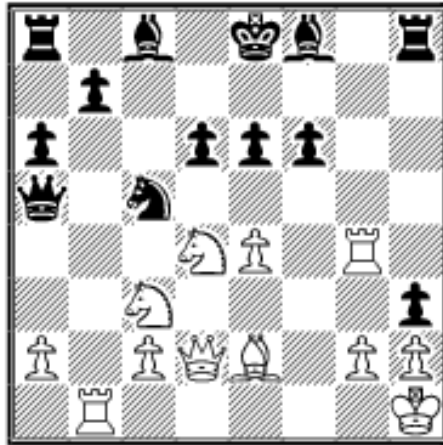


18. Nd7 Re8 19. Nb6 Rb8 20. g3 Ng7 21. Nd7 Rc8 22. Nxf6+ exf6 23. Bf1 Rc2 24. Rd2 Rxd2 25. Nxd2 Bd5 26. Rxe8+ Nxe8 27. Nc4 Nc6 28. f4 f5 29. Kf2 f6 30. Ke3 b5 31. Nb6 Bh1 32. Bc5 Nc7 33. a4 Ne6 34. Ba3 Na7 35. axb5 axb5 36. Kd3 Kf7 37. Kc3 Nd8 38. Kb4 Ndc6+ 39. Kc5 Na5 40. Kb4 N5c6+ 41. Kc5 Na5 42. Kb4 N5c6+ 43. Kc5 Na5 ½–½

WIM Jennifer Shahade (2331) –

WGM Pin Wang (2473) [B97] Olympiad w Bled SLO (5), 10-30-2002

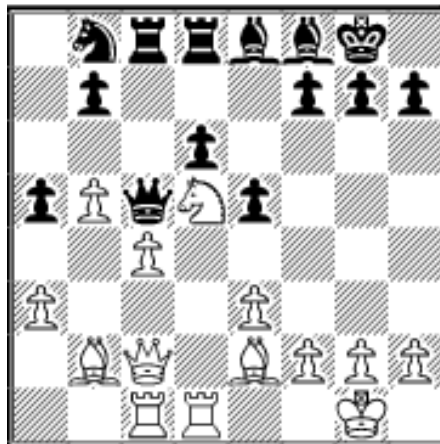
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Bg5 e6 7. f4 Qb6 8. Qd2 Qxb2 9. Rb1 Qa3 10. Bxf6 gxf6 11. Be2 h5 12. 0-0 Nd7 13. Kh1 Nc5 14. f5 Be7 15. Rf3 Qa5 16. Rg3 h4 17. Rg7 Bf8 18. Rg4 h3 19. fxe6 fxe6



20. e5 dxe5 21. Nb3 Nxb3 22. Rxb3 Bh6 23. Qd3 f5 24. Rg6 hxg2+ 25. Rxg2 Qd8 26. Bh5+ Ke7 27. Qe2 b5 28. Bf3 e4 29. Nxe4 fxe4 30. Qxe4 Bd7 31. Qb4+ Kf6 32. Qh4+ Kf7 33. Bh5+ Kf8 34. Rf3+ 1-0

IM Hoang Thanh Trang (2420) – IM Corina Peptan (2479) [E39] Olympiad w Bled SLO (4), 10-29-2002

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Qc2 c5 5. dxc5 0-0 6. a3 Bxc5 7. Nf3 Qb6 8. e3 Be7 9. Be2 Nc6 10. 0-0 d6 11. b4 Bd7 12. Bb2 Rac8 13. Rfd1 Rfd8 14. Rac1 Be8 15. Ne4 e5 16. Nfg5 Nxe4 17. Nxe4 a5 18. b5 Nb8 19. Nc3 Bf8 20. Nd5 Qc5



21. Bc3 Bc6 22. Bxa5 Bxd5 23. Rxd5 Qxa3 24. Bxd8 Rxd8 25. Qd1 Rc8 26. Ra1 Qc3 27. Ra8 b6 28. Rxd6 g6 29. Rxb6 Nd7 30. Rxc8 Nxb6 31. Rxf8+ 1-0

Paul Truong assisted Susan Polgar in the preparation of this column. Susan Polgar is available for chess instruction. For more information, visit the Polgar Chess Center, 97-09 64th Road, Rego Park, NY 11374 (Tel: 718-897-4600) or email: PolgarChessInc@aol.com



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