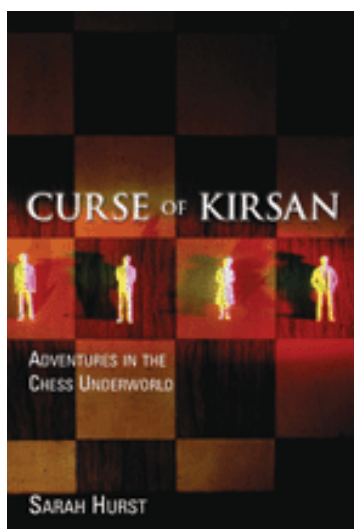




## C O L U M N I S T S

## *Susan Polgar on Chess*

Susan Polgar



### Order

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## My Top 10 Most Memorable Moments in Chess (Part 2)

I have experienced hundreds if not thousands of exciting, wonderful and memorable moments during my chess career, a career that has spanned almost 30 years. It was not easy, but I have narrowed these moments down to the top 10. This is a short preview of the book I am working on right now titled *My Top 10 Most Memorable Moments in Chess*. This is part of the new chess book series of the same name. I hope you enjoy it. David Letterman, the top 10 countdown is in your honor.

### 10. Meeting Bobby Fischer

**9. Scoring 10-0 at the 1973 Budapest Championship for girls under 11 at the age of 4!**

**8. Winning 1981 World Junior Championship for girls under 16**

**7. Winning the gold medal at the 1990 Olympiad**

**6. Becoming the first woman ever to break the gender barrier, qualifying for the Men's World Championship Zonal Tournament.**

**5. Becoming the #1 ranked woman player in the world at age 15**

**4. Winning the 1992 Women's World Blitz and Rapid Championship**

**3. Winning the 1996 Women's World Chess Championship**

**2. Winning the gold medal at the 1988 Olympiad**

## **1. Becoming the first woman ever to break the gender barrier, earning the Grandmaster title**

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### **6. Becoming the first woman ever to break the gender barrier, qualifying for the Men's World Championship Zonal Tournament**

This was a historic moment for me as well as for women's chess. A woman chess player finally had been able to break through the gender barrier and qualify for the "Men's World Championship" Zonal tournament. This is a moment I will always cherish. Unfortunately, this occasion brought me both wonderful memories as well as horrific ones.

Between April and May of 1986, I participated in the Hungarian National Championship in Budapest. Going into the tournament, all participants were told that the top 3 finishers would qualify to play in the "Men's" World Championship Zonal Tournament. I had just turned 17 right before the tournament and until then, nobody would even think about a woman qualifying for the "Men's" World Championship.

But I was brought up differently by my parents. I was taught that I could accomplish anything I want if I put in the hard work. I had put in a lot of hard work since I had been 4 or 5. Unfortunately, I was not told that as a woman and Jew, I would be black-listed. By the time my younger sisters had begun to play serious chess, my battles had cleared the way for them.

The unexpected happened. Knowing that I needed to finish in the top 3 to achieve the unthinkable, I paced myself to accomplish just that. I finished tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> with IM Laszlo Hazai, behind Grandmaster Ivan Farago. I was very happy of what I have accomplished. I had become the first woman ever to qualify for the "Men's World Championship" Zonal tournament. But The happy moment quickly turned sour. Many people were not happy. The Hungarian Chess Federation announced that only the top two would represent Hungary and not the top three.

No problem, I said to myself. So we will have a play-off between IM Hazai and me and the winner will move on. Wrong! The decision was made. Zsuzsa Polgar is *not* going to the "Men's World Championship" Zonal tournament. IM Hazai had a better tie-break and he will represent Hungary. After I legitimately qualified and broke the gender barrier, I learned rules can be changed at any time (especially if you are a Jewish woman).

To add more insult to injury, FIDE also refused to allow me to participate in the Men's World Championship Zonal tournament. The reason? The word "Men's Championship" speaks for itself. Dr. Laszlo Lako of Hungary

stated that he would not allow Polgar or any other Hungarian women to play in the Men's World Championship Zonal tournament even if FIDE would have agreed to let me play. The Hungarian federation and FIDE succeeded in stopping me from participating even though I had earned my spot. However, they could not stop women forever. They had to change the name to the World Chess Championship in the following cycle and the word 'Men' was removed.

Fortunately, my loss was a gain for women in chess. Now, all women can compete in the overall World Chess Championship. Someday, hopefully another woman can break through the next barrier and win it all. But in the meantime, I am very proud to be able to chisel through the wall of sex discrimination in chess for future generations. I am happy to see so many good women players besides my sisters such as GM Stefanova, GM Koneru, the Kosintseva sisters, many Chinese women players, etc. I hope this trend will continue.

Another reason why this event was one of the most memorable moments for me is because it made me a stronger player and a better human being. Rather than dwelling on the discrimination and unfairness, I used it as a motivational tool. I realized that I had to work even harder to accomplish my goals. I also learned to be more compassionate and understanding to everyone because I want no one to experience what I had experienced.

## **5. Becoming the #1 ranked woman player in the world at age 15**

At the age of 15, I became the #1 ranked woman player in the world. This was quite a memorable moment for me. My ELO at that time was the highest of any woman in history. In addition, I was also the youngest woman player in the top 25 in the world ranking. I may have been ranked #1 even sooner had I been allowed to travel freely to play. Unfortunately, I had very limited opportunity to play to gain ELO points. This was how things used to work in the Communist countries at that time. Many similar stories existed in the Soviet Union as well.

Beside the personal satisfaction of beating the system and gaining the #1 ranking in spite of so many roadblocks, the door was opened for me to travel to the West. I also had helped from the Western and domestic media, hounding the Hungarian Chess Federation. Finally, the Hungarian Chess Federation could no longer prevent me from playing abroad. And this also helped my 2 younger sisters, Sofia and Judit.

Therefore, even though I was not chasing after the #1 women's ranking because I was going after the overall World Championship, this event changed my life and my the lives of my family. The Polgar name was then known worldwide. The long-kept secret was out.

In addition, beside the great player from Sweden Pia Cramling and me at that time, no one else could come close to the Soviet women. They had dominated the game for decades. In a way, I have to thank my friend Pia for my achievements in chess. We helped push each other toward the top. It was the kind of friendly rivalry that was needed to help both players.

Once I had the opportunity to play, good things happened. At the age of 16, I had a higher rating than the great world champion Anatoly Karpov at that same age. The following year at 17, I became the top-rated overall junior under 18 in the world, boys or girls. My success continued. By looking back, becoming #1 in the world was a stepping-stone for my professional chess career toward the bigger picture. This is one moment I would never forget.

#### **4. Winning the 1992 Women's World Blitz and Rapid Championship**

In the preceding year (January 1991), I had become the first woman ever to earn the overall grandmaster title through norm qualification. At the end of 1991, my baby sister Judit became the second woman to do the same, followed by Pia Cramling in 1992.

As 1992 began, the Soviet women seemed to have something to prove. At the World Blitz and Rapid Women's Championship, the big guns came to put on a show. The top 10 women who participated in both of these World Championships were: Judit Polgar; Susan Polgar; M. Chiburdanidze; K. Arakhamia; S. Matveeva; Sophia Polgar; A. Galliamova; A. Maric; E. Sakhatova; and M. Voiska

Even though our official ratings were only 20 points apart, my sister Judit was the odds-on favorite to win both of these world championships. I was considered to be the contender for the silver medal in both events. The battle in both championships was quite intense. The competition was tough.

In the World Blitz Championship, I finished 1<sup>st</sup> with 22½ points out of a grueling 26 games, all in one day! With 26 rounds, there could be no luck. It was a battle of chess, mental toughness, physical endurance, and raw nerves. My sister Judit finished right behind me with 22 out of 26. Alisa Galliamova finished 3<sup>rd</sup> with 20 and my other sister Sophia finished tied with Women's World Champion Chiburdanidze for 4<sup>th</sup> with 19½.

In the World Rapid Championship, the race was even closer. Going into the last round, my sister Sophia was leading both Judit and I by one-half point with World Champion Chiburdanidze a half-point behind Judit and me. Therefore, any of us had the chance to win.

Both World Champion Chiburdanidze and I won while Judit drew.

Unfortunately, Sophia lost. Therefore, I finished 1<sup>st</sup> with 12 out of 15 while Sophia had to settle in a 3-way tie for second with 11½. However, Sophia got 2<sup>nd</sup> place on tie-breaks, with World Champion Chiburdanidze in 3<sup>rd</sup> and Judit in 4<sup>th</sup>.

This was a bittersweet moment for me. Even though I was ecstatic that I had won both World Championships, I was sad that it had to be over my two younger sisters. I wish I could have had both of them share the glory with me. How can you enjoy what supposed to be very happy moments when your own sisters did not do as well? It is like Serena and Venus Williams battling it out for the top spot in a Grand Slam. One has to win and one has to lose.

Winning these two World Championships gave me two of the three legs needed to win the Triple Crown in chess (Rapid, Blitz and Conventional Time Control). Only one more and I would accomplish something that had never been done by anyone in chess, male or female, and that is winning the Chess Triple Crown. Therefore, this was a very special moment for me.

***Susan Polgar (2550) – Bent Larsen (2560) Veterans - Women, Monte Carlo, 1994***

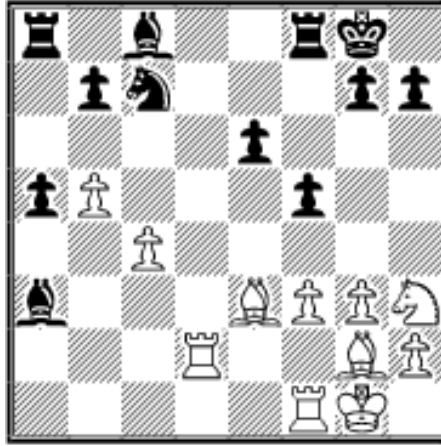
1. d4 c6 2. c4 d6 3. Nc3 e5 4. Nf3 Nd7 5. e4 Ngf6 6. Be2 Be7 7. 0-0 0-0 8. Be3 a6 9. d5 cxd5 10. cxd5 Ng4 11. Bd2 Nb6?! 12. h3 Nf6 13. Be3 Ne8 14. a4 Nd7 15. a5 g6 16. Nd2 Bg5 17. Bxg5 Qxg5 18. Nc4 Rb8 19. Qc1! Qf4 [19...Qxc1 20. Rfxcl b5 21. axb6 Nxb6 22. Na5±] 20. b4 h5 21. Ra2 b5 22. axb6 Nxb6 23. Na5! Kg7 24. Nc6 Ra8 25. Qxf4 exf4 26. Rc1 Nf6 [26...Nc7 27. Na4 Nxa4 28. Rxa4±] 27. Rca1!+-



27...Re8 28. f3 Nfd7 29. Bxa6 Bxa6 30. Rxa6 Rac8 [30...Rxa6 31. Rxa6 Ra8 32. Rxa8 Nxa8 33. Nb5+-] 31. Nb5 Nc4 32. Nca7 Rb8 33. Nxd6 Nxd6 34. Rxd6 Ne5 [34...Rb7 35. Nc6+-] 35. b5 Rb7 36. Rda6 h4 37. Rc1 Nd7 38. Nc8! Rb8 39. Nd6 Rf8 40. Rc7 Ne5 41. b6 Ra8 42. Rxa8 1-0

***Susan Polgar (2550) – Elena Akhmilovskaya-Donaldson (2430)*****Moscow Olympiad, Moscow, 1994**

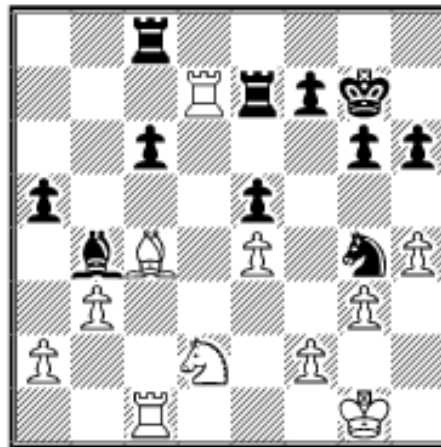
1. d4 f5 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 e6 4. c4 d5 5. Qc2 c6 6. Nh3 Be7 7. 0–0 0–0 8. Nd2 Ne4 9. Nxe4 dxe4 10. Be3 Nd7 11. Rad1 c5 12. dxc5 Qa5 13. a3 Nxc5 14. b4 Qa4 15. Qa2 Na6 16. Rd2 [16. Qb2 b6 17. Nf4] 16...Nc7 17. f3 a5 18. b5 exf3 19. exf3 Qxa3 20. Qxa3 Bxa3



21. Bb6 Ne8 22. Ra2 Bb4 23. Rb1 Bc3 24. Rb3 Bf6 25. Rba3 e5 26. c5 g5 27. Rxa5 Rxa5 28. Rxa5 Ng7 29. Nf2 Ne6 30. Bf1 [30. c6 bxc6 31. bxc6±] 30...Nd4 31. Bc4+ Kg7 32. Kg2 Re8 33. Ra7 [33. Bd5 Bd8 34. Ra8 Bxb6 35. cxb6 Kf8 36. Rb8±] 33...Kh8 34. c6 bxc6 35. Bxd4 exd4 36. b6 d3 37. Ra8 Bd7 38. b7 Be5 39. Bf7 [39. Nxd3 Bd6 40. Nc5+-] 39...Rb8 1–0 [40. Nxd3 Kg7 41. Nxe5 Rxb7+-]

***Susan Polgar (2550) - Alisa Galliamova (2475) Candidate Tournament, Tilburg, 1994***

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nc3 e6 5. Bg5 h6 6. Bxf6 Qxf6 7. e3 Nd7 8. Bd3 dxc4 9. Bxc4 g6 10. 0–0 Bg7 11. Qe2 0–0 12. Rfd1 a5 13. e4 e5 14. d5 Nb6 15. b3 Rd8 16. h3 Bf8 17. Qe3 Nd7 18. dxc6 bxc6 19. Rd3 Re8 20. Na4 Qf4 21. Rc1 Kg7 22. Nd2 Bb4 23. Qe2 Nf6 24. Nb6 Rb8 25. Nxc8 Rbxc8 26. g3 Qg5 27. h4 Qg4 28. Qxg4 Nxg4 29. Rd7 Re7



30. Rxe7 Bxe7 31. Be2 Nf6 32. Nc4 Nxe4 33. Bf3 Nd6 34. Nxe5 c5 35. Nc6 Nf5 36. Rc4 Rc7 37. Bg2 Bd6 38. Nxa5 Ra7 39. Nb7 Be7 40. a4 Nd6 41. Nxd6 Bxd6 42. Kf1 f5 43. Rc2 Kf6 44. Ke2 g5 45. hxg5+ Kxg5 46. Bf3 h5 47. Rc4 Ra5 48. Kd3 Be5 49. Rh4 Bd4 50. Rxh5 Kf6 51. Rh2 Ke5 52. Kc4 Ra7 53. Bd5 Ra5 54. f3 Kf6 55. Rh8 Ra7 56. Rf8+ Kg6 57. Ra8 Re7 58. a5 Re3 59. a6 Rc3+ 60. Kb5 c4 61. Bxc4 Rxf3 62. a7 Bxa7

63. Rxa7 Rxg3 64. b4 f4 65. Rf7 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](mailto:PolgarChessInc@aol.com)



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