



## Taking Chess to the Next Level of Popularity

Back in early 2005, Mr. Phil Innes, business manager for Chessville.com, approached Paul Truong with the idea of a long distance match between St. Petersburg, Russia and the Polgar Chess Center, New York City. It sounded intriguing and a verbal agreement was made to move forward with the project.

Eventually, the project advanced to the next level with an additional idea from Mr. Rob Mitchell (a chess dad and enthusiast from Nashville, TN) to create a documentary about the history of chess. Rob then approached an acquaintance from church, Mr. Mike Cowger, who is in the production business. Mike liked the idea and discussed it with his colleague, Mr. Michael Elley. The momentum and enthusiasm grew with each step.

During the Supnationals Scholastic Tournament in April 2005 in Nashville, the producers Michael Elley, Mike Cowger, Rob Mitchell and a few others met Paul and me to talk about this unique chess project. We discussed the idea of a successful chess TV show. I was very impressed with their professionalism, knowledge of the industry, and enthusiasm for doing something revolutionary. That was the beginning of chess history in the making.

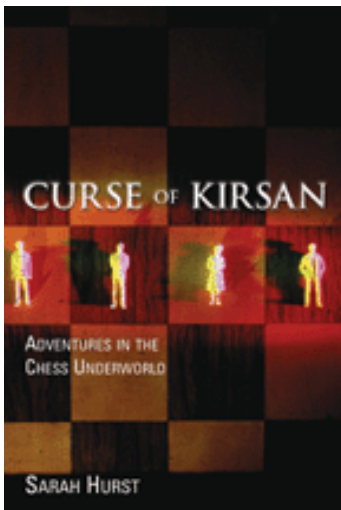
The next few months involved a lot of planning and coordinating to make the show happen. The filming of the US players was originally supposed to take place in New York City, but the idea of filming it in Nashville in a professional studio became the obvious choice.

The original line up included Hikaru Nakamura and Gata Kamsky (for the United States) and Peter Svidler (for Russia). But because of scheduling conflicts the teams had to be revised. The final team arrived in Nashville a few days early to test out the equipment and familiarize themselves with the studio setting. After all, it is not everyday that you have a make up artist and personal assistants doing everything possible to make you look good.

### COLUMNISTS

## *Susan Polgar on Chess*

Susan Polgar



*Curse of Kirsan*  
by Sarah Hurst



*Testing the Equipment*

The TV producers also wanted to pamper the participants and treat them with the respect enjoyed by other mainstream sports stars. Therefore, everyone was picked up from the airport and chauffeured around town in stretch limos (Lincoln or Hummer), and beautiful hotel accommodations were provided by the Sheraton Music City Hotel and Convention Center in Nashville. When the players arrived, each received a very nice gift basket with lots of goodies, and they had open charge privilege at the hotel. Plus, everyone had their own dressing rooms and personal assistants at the studio.



*The Hummer Limo*

On Friday, July 8, the players and producers met with the media. Saturday, July 9 was rehearsal day and the players spent the entire day at the studio. Everything had to be checked to make sure the taping would go smoothly on Sunday.

Accompanying the show was the Grammy nominated bluegrass band *Bering Strait*. The members are located in Nashville, TN, but hail from Obninsk, Russia. They were the first Russian band to be nominated for a Grammy award

and it was a stroke of genius on the part of the producers to combine chess and music and to reach out to both fan bases.



*Bluegrass Band Bering Strait*

The players and the band were in separate studios; the only interaction was with the media, the taping, and here and there during rehearsal. The event was broadcast via satellite worldwide to a potential audience of more than 300 million people around the globe (at least 60 countries and 30 major markets in the United States). They also broadcast on Web TV, which could potentially add millions more viewers.

The show was taped with ten professional studio cameras in three separate studios (the players, the commentators, and the live audience). It was the most professionally done televised chess event, but there were still a few technical problems since this was the first time a project this size was attempted.



*The Playing Studio*

A few minutes before the match was supposed to begin, the Russian players



disputed the release forms and refused to play under the agreed time control. They said they were not correctly informed by the person in charge of their side. Our players had to accept every demand that was imposed by the Russians or else cancel the show, which threw our match strategy off. At one point, GM Alexander Onischuk even had to call Russia to plead with them to play. The Russians finally agreed, but on their terms.



*The US Team (l-r: Stripunsky, Polgar, Gulko, Onischuk)*

The first match began and before the commentator, Paul Truong, could say hello to the live audience, one of the game monitors went dead. Oooops! He and his co-host “winged it” and did the best they could under the circumstances. It was very difficult to cover 4 fast-paced rapid games simultaneously, and I was amazed at the speed with which Paul was able to analyze and explain the games to the audience.

The final score was a controversial 6-2 loss for the US team. But we thought we had won by the score of 5-3, because three clocks showed flag falls for the Russian side. After my time claim was rejected, I immediately blundered and lost an easily drawn rook and pawn endgame. Boris Gulko also thought he had won on time, only to have his claim rejected as well.

Even with these minor problems, the show was a big success. The score of the match wasn't really important. What was important was the excitement it generated for US Chess and the millions of viewers worldwide.



*The Whole Gang*

This show could not have happened if it was not for the cooperation and assistance from hundreds of people. Here are just some of the names: Michael Elley, Michael Cower ([www.ChessMasterMinds.com](http://www.ChessMasterMinds.com)), Rob Mitchell, Mike Carnes, Phil Innes ([www.Chessville.com](http://www.Chessville.com)), Bering Strait and their management ([www.beringstraitonline.com](http://www.beringstraitonline.com)), Harry Sabine (Chief Arbiter), Frank Camaratta ([House of Staunton](http://HouseofStaunton.com)), Don Maddox (ChessBase USA), Frederic Friedel ([www.ChessBase.com](http://www.ChessBase.com)), Dr. Mikhail Korenman, Diana Macys (Media and PR), all the sponsors and supporters, all the people in production, and last, but not least, Paul Truong.

More televised events have been planned including one on October 29 with former USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev, Anatoly Karpov, and other dignitaries in Lindsborg, Kansas, the home of the Karpov School of Chess. This is a major project that Dr. Mikhail Korenman has worked very hard to make happen.

My next project to bring publicity to US Chess is the attempt to break the Guinness World Record by playing against 350 players at once on August 1, 2005 at the Gardens Mall in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.



*Setting Up for the Simul*

I have been working out vigorously to be able to endure the planned 24-hours of continuous walking and chess playing without a break (other than very short restroom stops).



*ABC Anchor John Shainman interviewing Susan Polgar*

***Gulko (2589) - Alekseev (2625)***

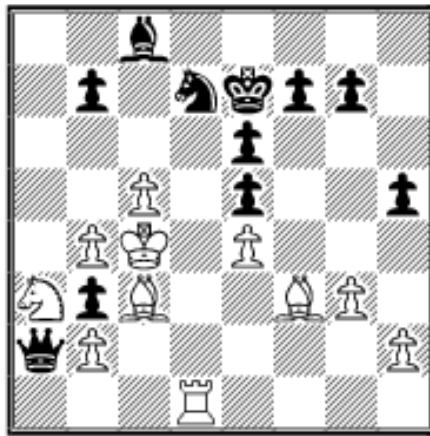
July 10, 2005 – Game 2 (USA vs. Russia)

**1.Nf3 c5 2.c4 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e6 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.g3 Qb6 7.Nb3 Ne5 8.e4 Bb4 9.Qe2 d6 10.Bd2 0-0 11.0-0-0 a5 12.f4 a4 13.fxe5 axb3 14.a3**

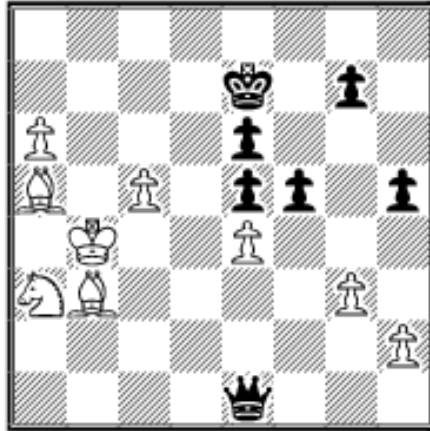


**14...dxe5 15.axb4 Ra1+ 16.Nb1 Qa7  
17.Qd3 Qa2 18.Bg2 Re8 19.Bc3 Re7  
20.Kd2 Rd7 21.Na3 Rxd1+ 22.Rxd1 h5  
23.Bf3 Rxd3+ 24.Kxd3 Nd7 25.c5 Kf8  
26.Kc4 Ke7**





**27.Rc1?** (27.Rb1!) **27...f5** **28.Bd1** **b5+**  
**29.Kxb5** **Nb8** **30.Kc4** **Nc6** **31.Bxb3?**  
(31.Rb1!) **31...Ba6+** **32.b5** **Na5+** **33.Bxa5**  
**Qxb2** **34.bxa6** (34.Rc3! **Qxa3** **35.Bb4+—**)  
**34...Qxc1+** **35.Kb4** **Qe1+**



**36.Ka4??** (36.Kb5!+—) **36...Qxe4+** **37.Bb4**  
**Qc6+** **38.Ka5** **f4** **39.Nc4** **f3** **40.Ne3** **Kd8**  
**41.Bc2** **Kc8** **42.Bd3** **Kb8** (42...**Qc7+!**—+)  
**43.Bb5** **Qe4** **44.Nf1** **Qd4** **45.c6** **e4** **46.Bd2**  
**Qd8+** **47.Ka4** **Qd4+** **48.Kb3** **Qd5+** **49.Kb4**  
**Qd4+**  $\frac{1}{2}$ — $\frac{1}{2}$

### Breaking News

On August 1, 2005, Susan Polgar attempted to break the Guinness World Record by playing against 350 players simultaneously at the Gardens Mall in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.



The previous record holder was British IM Andrew Martin who played against 321 opponents in early 2004. He scored 294 wins, 26 draws and 1 loss for a winning percentage of 95.64%. Martin broke the World Record held by Swedish grandmaster Ulf Anderson who played against 310 opponents in 1996.

The event was scheduled to begin at 10 AM, but players started to arrive at 8 AM and Susan began signing autographs, posing for pictures and chatting with fans. By 9 AM, because of a large last minute registration, the start was delayed by about 30 minutes. The TV networks, local newspapers, associated press and CBS radio all covered the event, which garnered more mainstream media coverage than anyone had anticipated.



*The Registration Line*

After 326 players had registered, the organizers decided to begin the event. It was an amazing site to see rows upon rows of tables and chess sets throughout the mall from Sears to Bloomingdale's.





As more people arrived wanting to play, the organizers consulted with Susan and she consented to go for a second record of most consecutive games played. The previous record was 1102 games, set by WGM Anna-Maria Botsari from Greece. Susan ended up playing against 551 opponents and 1,131 games.

In the end, the following four records were broken:

- **326 Simultaneous Games Played** (Official first record against 326 players: 309 wins, 14 draws and 3 losses = 96.93% in 16 hours and 30 minutes)
- **Most games won 309**
- **Highest percentage 96.93%**
- **1,131 Consecutive Games Played** (Overall statistics which included 551 opponents: 1,112 wins, 16 draws and 3 losses = 99.03%)



Fun facts:

- 3:45 PM - 6,816 steps taken - 4.3 miles
- 5:15 PM - 8,091 steps taken - 5.1 miles
- 6:45 PM - 8,879 steps taken - 5.6 miles
- 9:15 PM - 9,733 steps taken - 6.1 miles
- 12:00 AM - 11,421 steps taken - 7.2 miles
- 1:00 AM - 12,395 steps taken - 7.85 miles
- 2:00 AM - 13,220 steps taken - 8.4 miles
- 3:00 AM - 14,361 steps taken - 9.1 miles
- She took only five 5-minute breaks during the entire record simul.
- The youngest player was 4 years old and the oldest was 95.
- There were players from the United States, Turkey, Australia, Sweden, Jamaica, Hungary, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia and Canada, etc.
- The last official game ended at 3:00 AM.

Special guests included vice mayor (and former mayor) Eric Jablin; countless

officials from Palm Beach Gardens; the Managing Director of the US Chess Trust, Barbara DeMaro; and the Executive Director of the USCF, Mr. Bill Hall.



*First Official Game against Eric Jablin*

This would not have happened without the hard work of countless people from Palm Beach Gardens. Thank you to everyone for your tireless efforts. But the biggest recognition must go to Mr. Joel Channing and the Channing Corporation, Don Schultz, Jon and Jeffrey Haskel, the Susan Polgar Foundation, Barbara DeMaro and the U.S. Chess Trust, International Chess Marketing, American Chess Equipment, Excalibur Electronics and the World Chess Hall of Fame, The Gardens Mall, Northern Palm Beaches Chamber of Commerce, Boca Raton Chess Club, Palm Beach County Sports Commission, The Palm Beach Post, Florida Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Palm Beach Gardens Marriott and William T. Dwyer High School, and many more people for making this possible.

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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, 103-10 Queens Boulevard, Forest Hills, NY 11375 (Tel: 718-897-4600) or email: [PolgarChessInc@aol.com](mailto:PolgarChessInc@aol.com)

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