



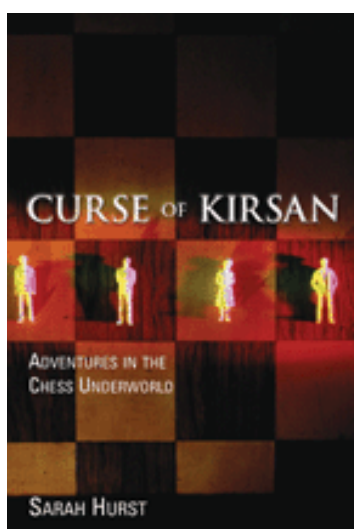
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COLUMNISTS

## *Susan Polgar on Chess*

Susan Polgar



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## My Top 10 Most Memorable Moments in Chess

I have experienced hundreds if not thousands of exciting, wonderful and memorable moments during my chess career that has spanned almost 30 years. It was not easy, but I have narrowed it 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**

### **10. Meeting Bobby Fischer**

If you randomly ask someone on the street to name one chess player, chances are the name Bobby Fischer will come up. Some consider him the greatest world champion ever. Some consider him the most eccentric. People may disagree with his views on various issues. However, no one can ever dispute what he has done for chess. No one can doubt his love and passion for the game and definitely no one can question his skills in chess.

Bobby Fischer is a chess genius. He is a chess legend. He raised chess to another level.

One of my memorable moments in chess was meeting him. He visited my family and me in Hungary and stayed in our summer home. Even though it was supposed to be a secret, he could not escape the media frenzy.

When Bobby did not talk about issues that were very dear to his heart or chess, he was a very friendly, funny, and definitely a “normal” person. When he talked about issues he feels strongly about, he became very “passionate”. Whether I agree with his views or not is irrelevant. It does not change my respect and admiration for his abilities, knowledge and accomplishments in chess. He is simply one of the best ever. And he is definitely one of the most colorful and one of the most recognized world champions ever.

It was such a unique experience for me to be able to play (Fischer Random Chess) against Bobby. Some of the games were blitz at home. Others were played while we were in restaurants. We also analyzed some positions. Everyone knew what Bobby used to think about women’s chess. After our many games, even though I was not able to change his mind about many other topics, I am sure that I changed his mind about women’s chess. I had very good results against Bobby. But the final score is something I would never reveal unless Bobby consents. Trust is something that is very important to him.

We even agreed to play an official “Battle of the Sexes Fischer Random Chess Match” on the world stage. Bobby believes that Fischer Random Chess is a true test of skills and talents, without just relying on home analysis. I agree with him. I wish this game would be more popular. Unfortunately, the match did not happen. Maybe one day it will. Overall, it was a very good and, undoubtedly, a memorable moment in my chess career.

### **9. Scoring 10-0 at the 1973 Budapest Championship for girls under 11**

## **at the age of 4!**

When I first started to play chess at the age of 4, no one could ever predict what the future would hold for me. I of course did not know it myself. But when I competed and won the Budapest Championship for Girls under 11 with a perfect 10-0 score, my life was changed once and for all. Winning any tournament with a 10-0 result is incredible. To do so at the tender age of 4 against other girls who were as much as twice my age was something I can never forget.

I was so small I could not reach the chessboard. I had to sit on pillows just to be able to see the pieces. I was just a little munchkin. After this tournament, I realized that I could compete. My parents began to recognize my potential in the game. This one tournament changed my life. It set a direction for my future. Four world championships and six olympic medals later, I looked back and understood that this tournament was the turning point of my life.

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

Another milestone in my life was winning the 1981 World Junior Championship for girls under 16-years old. Some may wonder what is so special about a winning a World Junior Championship when I have won many other prestigious titles? Because it was another confirmation during my career that I could compete in chess at a world-class level.

Prior to this tournament, I had never been allowed to travel to the West to play chess. When one has not competed against a wide range of international players, it is difficult to validate one's ability. In addition, to be able to win a big tournament the first time out under extreme pressure and incredible expectations from countless people was a test for me to see. Not only that, if I did not do well, I may not have been allowed to travel to compete and represent my country again.

I succeeded with flying colors. It confirmed once again that I could play chess. It proved that I could handle pressure. That is why this event was a memorable one. In a way, it helped shape my chess career and my future. It resulted in headlines in many newspapers in the West. The name Zsuzsa Polgar would now be a name to be reckoned with.

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

Prior to Hungary winning the gold medal in the 1988 Chess Olympiad, the Soviet women had ruled the chess world. Because the Polgar sisters usually only competed in men's tournaments until then, many people felt that we would not do well in a women's tournament. After the Polgar sisters

stunned the chess world by taking the gold medal in the 1988 Olympiad, becoming the first non-Soviet team to do so, many people still did not believe that we were good. Many people believed that we were just lucky.

This is why returning two years later with the same unit to win the gold again was important to us. We wanted to prove to the world, not to mention ourselves, that we could do it. In a long and nerve-wracking event such as the Olympiad, anything can happen. Nothing can be taken for granted.

We did what we had to do. We took care of business. We came away with back-to-back gold medals, ahead of the Soviets once again. I think this victory shut down all talk about the Polgar sisters not being able to compete against other women. This myth has been put to rest for good. It certainly was a memorable moment of my career.

Next month, the count-down will continue with a lot of exciting information. Below is a sample of some of my victories:

### ***Zsuzsa Polgar – Zurab Azmaiparashvili Dortmund 1990***

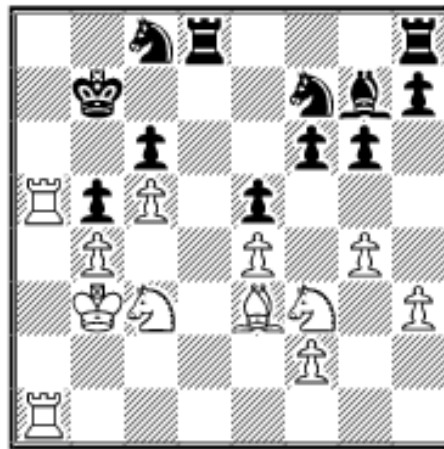
**1.d4 d6 2.Nf3 g6 3.c4 Bg7 4.Nc3 e5** This is one of Azmaiparashvili's pet lines. At the time, he was part of Kasparov's analytical team. **5.e4 Nc6** Another possibility that my opponent had successfully played in many of his games: 5...ed4 6.Nd4 Nc6 7.Be3 Nge7. **6.Bg5 f6 7.Be3** The point of purposely losing a tempo was to force Black to blunt the Bishop's power with 6...f6. Hence, in this case we can talk about a "useful loss of tempo". **7...Nh6** To maintain the e7-square free for the other Knight in case of 8.d5. **8.dxe5 dxe5 9.Qxd8+ Kxd8** After 9...Nd8 10.Nd5 White would win a pawn since if Black tries to protect c7 with 10...Ne6, then 11.Bxh6 Bxh6 12.Nxf6. **10.h3** The idea of this move is, partly to avoid Nh6-g4 as well as to prepare the move g2-g4. **10...Be6** 10...f5 would be a mistake as 11.Bg5 is very strong. **11.0-0-0+ Kc8** To go to the other side is worse: 11...Ke8 12.Nd5 with a clear advantage for White. **12.g4** The purpose of this and my next move is to prevent Black's possibility of counterplay on the kingside. **12...Nf7** If Black played 12...f5, I would get the initiative after 13.gf5 gf5 14.Rg1. **13.Rg1** This move is aimed against Black's h7-h5 plans. **13...b6** Strategically Black should try to get rid of his "bad" Bishop with 13...Bh6. Then I planned to play 14.Nd5 maintaining a small advantage. **14.c5!** A strong move that opens up the diagonal for the Bishop on f1. **14...Kb7 15.Nd5 Rad8**



Black cannot play (15...Ncd8 with the idea of c7-c6, kicking my proud Knight on d5, because then I play 16.Ba6+! Kxa6 17.Nxc7+ Kb7 18.Nxe6+- Nxe6 19.Rd7+ leading to a big advantage for White. If Black tries to protect the c7-pawn with 15...Rac8, then I would continue with 16.b4 and Black can't win a pawn with 16...Bxd5? 17.exd5 Nxb4 as after 18.c6+ Kb8 19.a3 Na2+ 20.Kb2 the Black Knight is trapped.) **16.Ba6+!**

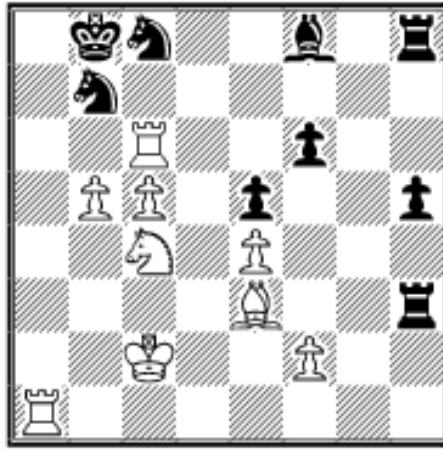
A spectacular move to increase my spatial advantage. **16...Kb8 17.a3 Bc8 18.Bxc8** Keeping the Bishops on 18.Bc4 was also good. **18...Kxc8 19.b4 b5 20.a4! a6** Black's queenside would fall apart after 20...bxa4 21.b5 Na5 22.Nd2 guarding against the black Knight penetrating to c4 or b3. **21.axb5 axb5 22.Kb2 Kb7 23.Kb3 Nb8?** The crucial mistake 23...Ra8 wasn't good either, because after 24.Nc3 Black either loses a pawn or must allow the invasion of the Rook to d7. Objectively the best move was 23...Rhe8, but in any event there is no doubt that White is not taking any risks by trying to win this game.

**24.Ra1 Nc6** What else Black can do? If 24...c6 for example, then 25.Nb6 Rd3+ (25...Nd7 26.Ra5 Nxb6 27.cxb6 Ra8 28.Rd1 Rxa5 [28...Rhd8 29.Rxa8+-] 29.Rd7+ Kc8 30.Rc7+ wins or after) 26.Kc2 Rhd8 27.Ne1+- and the Rook has no where to go.) **25.Nc3 Na7 26.Ra5 c6 27.Rga1 Nc8**



If 27...Ra8 28.Ra6 with the strong threat of Rb6 and Black's position deteriorates. **28.Nxb5!** After increasing the positional advantage, the position is ripe for some "action". **28...cxb5 29.Rxb5+ Kc7 30.Ra6 30.Rba5**, opening the way for the b-pawn, would probably have been even stronger. **30...Rd1 31.Rba5 Nd8 32.Kc2 Rh1 33.b5 Rxh3 34.Nd2 h5 35.gxh5 gxh5 36.Nc4** Despite the fact that I am a piece down, I still have a huge

territorial advantage. Practically all of my pieces are attacking the black King, and in addition, the dangerous passed b- and c-pawns make Black's position lost. **36...Nb7 37.Ra1 Bf8 38.Rc6+ Kb8** **DIAGRAM**



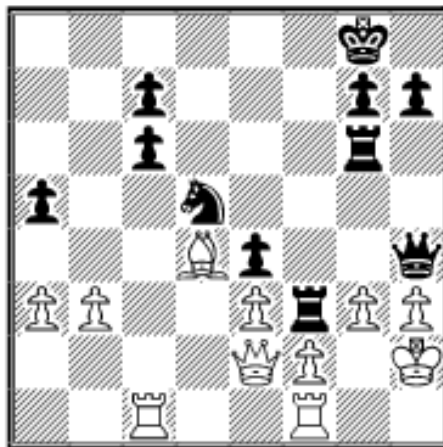
**39.Ra8+!** I can afford to offer more "gifts". (An elegant finish under time pressure!) **39...Kxa8 40.Rxc8+ Ka7 41.c6+ Rxe3 42.fxe3** One of my pawns will surely queen, or Black will be mated, and that was enough to cause Azmaiparashvili to resign. **1-0**

*Alexander Chernin – Zsuzsa Polgar  
Budapest 1993*

**1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.e3 Bb4 5.Qc2 Bxc3 6.Qxc3 Qe7 7.d3 d5**

**8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Qc2 0-0 10.a3 a5 11.b3 Bg4 12.Be2 Rad8 13.0-0 f5 14.h3 Bh5 15.Bb2** White couldn't win a pawn with 15.Ne5 Qe5 16.Bh5, because I have the *zwischenzug* 16...f4! with a clear advantage. **15...e4!** I decided to take the initiative. **16.dxe4 fxe4 17.Ne5** With the idea of creating doubled pawns on the c-file (Nxc6). After 17.Ne1 Black is better off keeping the Bishops on the board with 17...Bg6. **17...Bxe2 18.Nxc6 bxc6 19.Qxe2 Rd6!** Despite the fact that most of the pieces are gone, Black is ready to start an attack on white's King. **20.Rac1?** This is already a serious mistake. White had to play 20.Bd4 followed by 21.f4, trying to liberate himself from the pressure of my e4-pawn.

**20...Rg6 21.Bd4** White has no way to avoid my next move. If for example he plays: 21.Kh1, I still proceed with 21...Rf3! 22.gf3 Qe6 23.Kh2 Rh6 with unstoppable mate in two moves. **21...Rf3!** Threatening to take the h3-pawn and causing chaos in White's camp. **22.g3** If White seeks counterplay on the queenside with 22.Qa6, then 22...Qd7 would decimate Chernin's hopes (the check with 23.Qa8 will result in 23...Kf7 and White can simply resign). **22...Qh4 23.Kh2**



**23...Rgxf3!** I can afford 'tossing' one of my Rooks at this point **24.fxf3 Qxf3+** But not 24...Rxf3? because of 25.Rf8+! Kxf8 26.Qf2+ and everything turns around! **25.Kh1 Qxh3+ 26.Kg1 Rg3+ 27.Kf2 Qh4!** The highlight of the whole combination! **28.Rh1** If the King tries to run away with 28.Ke1, then 28...Rxe3+ 29.Kd2 Rxe2+ 30.Kxe2 Qg4+ is winning. **28...Rh3+** and White resigns since mate in two cannot be avoided. **0-1**

*Zsuzsa Polgar - Ljubomir Ljubojevic Bilbao 1987*

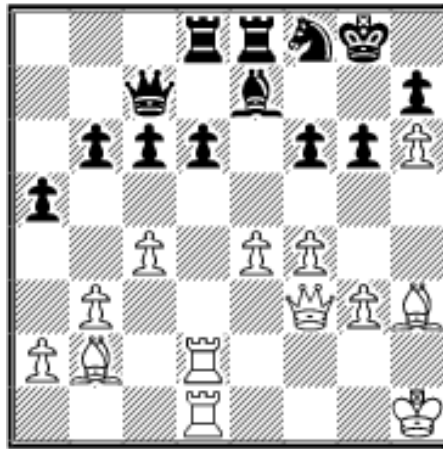
This game has a slightly different style from its predecessors. No

combinations, no fireworks, simple but clever a positional play, which developed into an attack with both players castling on the same side. There is also a special story connected with this game. Ljubojevic (Ljubo as he is known to many chessplayers) was complaining before the tournament started. He was attacking the organizers for inviting females (Chiburdanidze and myself). Ljubojevic maintained that the tournament was too strong for women... His score against us was 0-2!

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d6 3.g3 Bg4 4.Bg2** A customary plan for Black here is 4...Qc8 with the idea of Bh3 exchanging the strong Bishop. If then 5.h3 Bd7 there are some difficulties castling. **4...Nbd7 5.c4 e5 6.Nc3 c6 7.0-0 Be7 8.h3 Bxf3** Black would also have a hard time keeping his Bishop pair after 8...Bh5 9.Nh4 followed by g4. **9.exf3** Why double my pawn when it is not forced? My reasons were: a) after playing f3-f4 I'll have good control of the e5-square and the center; b) eventually a strong kingside pawn attack can develop. Of course 9.Bf3 would not be a mistake either. **9...exd4** This is a mistake. Black should maintain the tension in the centre, by simply playing 9...0-0 and after 10.b3 Re8, a balanced position would arise. **10.Qxd4 Qb6 11.Qd2!** An odd looking but good move. It looks like my Queen is blocking the development of my c1-Bishop. Not so, as I intend to launch it along the c1-a3 diagonal. **11...0-0 12.b3 Nc5 13.Re1 Rfe8 14.Bb2 a5 15.Ba3** What is this? Am I losing time? Why not immediately 14.Ba3? The reason is the a5-square was still available for the black Queen (threatening the Bishop on a3 and pinning my Knight on c3!) 14.Ba3 Qa5! 15.Bb2 d5! and Black is fine. **15...Bf8 16.Ne4!** Forcing Black to exchange Knights enabling me to repair my "damaged" pawn structure. **16...Nfxe4 17.fxe4 Rad8?** This looks like a natural move, but it makes Black's life miserable. After this it is all "one-sided". Preferable for Black would have been to sacrifice a pawn as follows: 17...g6 18.Bb2 Bg7! 19.Bg7 Kg7 20.Qd6 Rad8 21.Qf4 Nd3. Then Black has at least enough compensation for the pawn, because of the weakness I would have on the dark squares (especially d4). After evaluating that variation (had it occurred in the game) I decided that I would not have taken the pawn, but would have proceeded with 18.Rad1 maintaining some edge. **18.Bb2! Qc7** Now 18...g6 was not possible any longer, as 19.Qd4 would force resignation. **19.Rad1 Rd7 20.Bc3** This forces Black to weaken his pawn structure even more. **20...b6** Here I had to make perhaps the most difficult decision of the game. To my great surprise, my world famous opponent offered a draw here. Normally I would have considered it a good result, but I felt my position was already too good to accept a draw. This offer showed some more disrespect from my opponent, since it's not usual to have a draw offer made by a player with an inferior position. After some thought, I decided to continue the fight.

**21.Kh2 Qc8 22.Re3 Rde7 23.Rde1 Qc7 24.f4** In the last few moves my goal was, slowly but surely, to improve the positions of my pieces. **24...f6** If instead Black played 24...g6, which looks extremely risky, I would then

have had a chance to spoil my position with 25.Qd4 f6 26.Qf6 Bg7 27.Qh4 Bc3 28.Rc3 Ne4 29.Rce3 d5 and Black's troubles are behind him! However, with 25.Qb2, I could still keep the advantage. **25.Qf2 Re6 26.Qf3 Kh8 27.Kh1 Kg8** Here, my opponent was already in time pressure. He is unable to find any productive moves to improve his position, so he makes what are called "waiting moves", to come closer to the time control. With all honesty though, it is not that easy even with all the time in the world. **28.h4!** A multi-purpose move. It prepares the activation of the Bishop via h3-f5 as well as the h5-h6 advance of my pawn. **28...Kh8 29.Bh3 R6e7 30.h5 Rf7 31.Bf5** Threatening the quiet 32.Bg6! with devastating effect **31...Rd8 32.Rd1 Be7 33.Re2 Rff8 34.Rh2 Rfe8 35.Rhd2 Nd7 36.Bb2 Nf8 37.h6** (After a few maneuvering moves, it's "Show Time"! ) **37...g6 38.Bh3 Kg8**



**39.g4!** The final attack starts and for all practical purposes, Black can only sit back and watch hopelessly. **39...Ne6 40.g5 Nc5 41.gxf6 Bf8 42.f7+! Kxf7** 42...Qf7 was not possible because of 43.Qc3 and the white Queen is unstoppable on the long diagonal. **43.f5** Now the floodgates open, as Black's kingdom sinks. **43...Kg8 44.fxg6 hxg6 45.Qf6 Qh7 46.Rg2** Black resigned due to the fatal threat on g6. This game provided an example that a spectacular

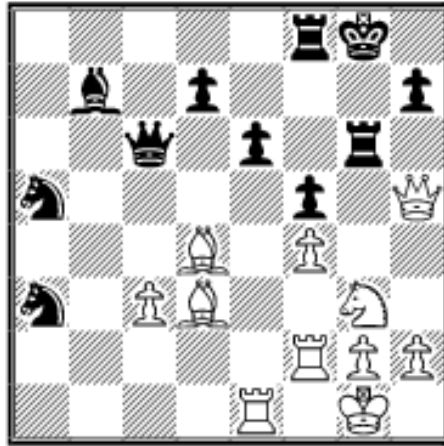
game can be produced without sacrifices. Black was smothered slowly. This could be more painful than 'sudden death'. Fortunately, I was not on the receiving end. **1-0**

### *Zsuzsa Polgar – Ivan Sokolov Pardubice, 1994*

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.a3** This is the Sämisch variation of the Nimzo Indian Defense, which usually leads to very colorful positions. **4...Bxc3+ 5.bxc3 c5 6.e3 Nc6 7.Bd3 0-0 8.Ne2 b6 9.e4 Ne8** This passive move intends to enable Black to play f5. **10.0-0 Ba6 11.f4 f5 12.Ng3 g6 13.Be3 Nd6** Another option was 13...cd4 14.cd4 d5. **14.exf5 gxf5** This move is an error. Black had to go for the complications that arise after 14...Nxc4! 15.Bxc4 Bxc4 16.fxg6 Bxf1 17.Qh5! Qe7 18.Rxf1. **15.Qe2 Na5** If Black tries to precede this move with 15...cxd4 16.cxd4 and only than 16...Na5 then 17.c5 Bxd3 18.Qxd3 Ndc4 19.d5 is very strong. **16.dxc5 Ndxc4 17.Bd4** Threatening 18.c6 which attacks the most vulnerable point of Black's pawn chain. **17...bxc5 18.Bxc5 Rf6 19.Rab1** I had another interesting idea here, but Black's cooperation is also needed to make it work. 19.Bd4 Rg6 20.Bxf5 exf5 21.Nxf5 Qe8 22.Ne7+ Kf7 23.Qh5 Kxe7 24.Rae1+ Re6 25.Qg5+ Kd6 26.Qc5#. The problem is that Black can also play 21...Nc6. **19...Rg6 20.Bd4 Rc8** If 20...Qc7 then I can sacrifice as



follows: 21.Nxf5 exf5 22.Bxf5 Nd6 23.Qe5. **21.Bxa7 Qc7 22.Bd4 Bb7 23.Rf2 Nxa3 24.Re1 Rf8!** A fine move by Ivan, defending against a potential White's sacrifice on f5. **25.Qh5! Qc6**



**26.Be4! Qb5** The Bishop couldn't be taken 26...fxe4 27.Qe5 Rff6 28.Nxe4 and White wins. **27.Bxf5!** Apparently the defense of f5 is not sufficient, **27...Rxf5** If 27...exf5 28.Re7 wins. **28.Nxf5 Qxf5 29.Qxf5 exf5** The material is nearly equal, however, my pieces are much more active. **30.Re8+ Kf7 31.Re5 Nc6 32.Rxf5+ Ke6 33.Rc5!** This is an important move that paralyzes the Knight on a3. **33...Rg8 34.Re2+ Kd6 35.Ra2 Ra8 36.Rh5**

**Nxd4 37.cxd4 Bd5 38.Rh6+** This check forces the black King back because 38...Be6 was not possible due to 39.f5. 38... **38...Kc7 39.Ra1 Be4 40.g4 d6 41.f5 Kc6 42.Rxh7 Kd5 43.Rh3 Rg8 44.Raxa3 Rxg4+ 45.Rhg3 Rf4 46.Rg6! Kxd4 47.Rxd6+ Ke5 48.Rd1 Bxf5 49.Rf1 Rxf1+ 50.Kxf1 Kf6 51.Rg3!** It's important to cut the black King's approach to my pawn. **51...Bg6 52.h4** Here Black resigned. I suppose Ivan Sokolov had foreseen the following continuation: 52.h4 Kf5 53.Kf2 Kf6 54.Kf3 Kf5 55.Rg5+ Kf6 56.Kf4 Bd3 57.h5 Bc2 58.h6 Bg6 59.Rg1 Bc2 60.Rg7 Bd3 61.Ra7 Kg6 62.h7 **1-0**

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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, 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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