

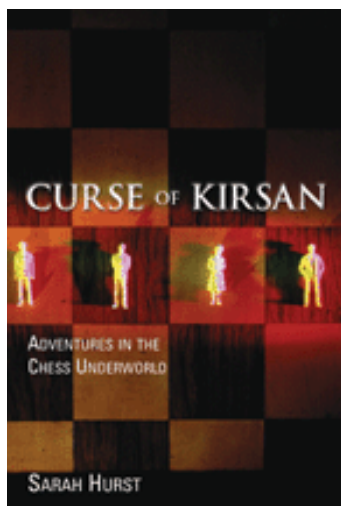


Questions & Answers from Chess Fans around the World

COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



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Giuseppe from Milan, Italy: What do you suggest to a beginner like me to improve to be a better player?

One of the first things I suggest you to do is study middlegame tactics and endgame techniques. There are many tactical puzzle books that you can learn from. I would say you can start with 10-20 puzzles daily. These puzzles can be checkmate in 1 or 2 or tactics that involve pins, forks, discovered attacks, etc. As you get better and more efficient, you can increase to maybe 30-40 puzzles daily. If you have time, the more puzzles you solve, the better you will become. You should also work with basic endgames. I am in the process of making a list of books for ChessCafe.com which I feel will help a certain categories of players. It is like my recommended guide. This can help you save time and get the best possible help. Good luck!

John K. from Burlington, Iowa wrote: What is your opinion about the current state of chess in America?

I think it is great. Chess as a game overall is growing by leaps and bounds in popularity. Everywhere you look, you see chess, from commercials, advertising, to clips in major Hollywood movies. It is wonderful to see this great game finally getting recognition.

However, organized chess as a national federation is a different story. The official governing body of chess in the United States is the US Chess Federation. The national federation is going through a rough period right now. I know they have people who are trying hard to fix it. I wish them the best and if there is something I can do to help, I will.

Jorge P. from Mexico City, Mexico wrote: What is your prediction of the X3D Deep Fritz versus Kasparov chess match? [The match starts November 11 in New York.]

That is a very tough question. As you know, the world's #1 Garry Kasparov tied with Deep Junior 3-3 in a 6-game match. In that match, I thought Garry played

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very well. He was properly prepared and he should have won the match. He had a little bad luck in game 3. Otherwise, he would have won the match. However, he did something I did not expect. The traditional wisdom is when you play against the computer, you are supposed to be more reserved. In other words, you need to play more positionally. But in that match, Garry went all out and he played very aggressively. This tends to favor the computer. But he proved me wrong. I was very impressed with his play.

This same program Deep Fritz tied with Vladimir Kramnik 4-4 in Bahrain. Vladimir played differently than Garry. He played the typical anti-computer chess which is his style. He is one of the most positional players today. He had an overwhelming score advantage against Deep Fritz but I think fatigue did him in at the end.

Giving the fact that Garry has to play the computer in 3D mode with the 3D glasses, my guess is the match would be a D as well, a DRAW (tie).

Gennady from Odessa, Ukraine: Do you recommend chess players play on the Internet? Does it help or hurt your chess?

This is a very common question that has been asked of me many times. There are pros and cons in Internet chess. The Internet is a great blessing for many young players, players who do not live near a big city or players who do not have much time to play over the board due to various circumstances.

Many top young players like GM Radjabov or GM Nakamura became very good partly because they have had a chance to play hundreds of games against top level competition daily. They have a chance to practice new opening lines, learn new things, gain self confidence and improve rapidly. That is very important.

For players who do not live near a big city or have very little time to play chess due to work or family, Internet chess gives them a great opportunity to play daily at their convenience. Some chess clubs are open only one day a week. Internet chess is 24/7. You can play against people around the world. That is quite exciting. These are some of the good things.

However, with every good comes another side. Internet chess takes away the personal touch, the personal face to face interaction. Some players behave badly such as disconnecting in losing positions or cussing after losing a game. They can do this because no one knows who they are and they can hide behind a wall of anonymity. There is also the issue of people using someone else's identity. There have been countless incidents where a player pretends to be a titled player to get a free account or to purposely hurt that person's reputation.

In my opinion, the worst thing about Internet chess is the handling the issue of cheating. There are two parts to this. The first one is when a player actually cheats by getting assistance from a computer program. The second is when someone who cannot accept a loss and then falsely blames the opponent of cheating. This is not real life. This is the Internet. People can make any claim

they want and they are not punished for wrongful accusations. Therefore, they don't care whose reputation they hurt by being irresponsible.

In my opinion, if you use internet chess properly, you can benefit a great deal. However, you have to weigh the pros and the cons of internet chess and come to your own conclusion. Different servers offer different kinds of play. Sample them and choose what is best for you.

Dima from Kiev, Ukraine: What are your chess plans in the future? Are you coming back to chess full time?

No, I do not plan to come back to chess full time. It is hard to do that being a single mother with two toddlers. They require a lot of time from me. I love chess and I truly believe it is a great game that can give so much pleasure and enjoyment for people of all ages. In addition, chess can also help children develop many different skills.

Therefore, my plan is to come back to chess in a very different role. I would like to help this game become more popular. I am also advocating chess to be part of in-school and after school curricula.

Another problem in chess that has been well documented is the amount of young players, especially girls, who drop out of chess after the 4th grade; the trend is alarming. Therefore, another major mission of mine is to change that trend. I want to use chess to help young children (especially girls) raise self esteem and self confidence. These projects mean a lot more to me than winning another title. Many of these plans will be announced in 2004.

Of course there is the Chess Olympiad in 2004. It is very exciting because I will be playing for the United States this time, trying to help the US Women's team capture its first ever medal. The Chinese, Russians, Ukrainians, Polish, Georgians, German, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Serbians, Romanian, Indian, etc., are all very strong and any of these teams can win a medal. It will be a grueling 2-3 weeks.

Juan E. from Miami, Florida: There are many children who play chess throughout America. Is there an official outline or guideline that parents and coaches can follow to help our kids?

That is an excellent question. You are correct in saying there are many children who play chess in America. Unfortunately, each chess coach uses his or her own method. I have not seen a uniform teaching method so far. I am also working on my own teaching system for parents and coaches. I am almost done. Once it is finished, I will have it posted on the following website www.USScholasticChess.org. It can give all parents and coaches an excellent tool to help the children.

There are also other chess training tips and information from all over the country

and around the world on that website. It was created through private funding to help the US Chess Federation, state and local scholastic organizations reach out to more young chess players across the country.

Mary D. from Kansas City, Kansas: Many people said that chess helps children. Can you explain how can chess do that?

Over the past few decades, numerous scientific studies have clearly shown that chess helps children in so many ways. Chess can help a child develop logical thinking, decision making, reasoning, and pattern recognition skills, which in turn can help math and verbal skills.

In addition, chess also teaches the important values of hard work, concentration, focus, objectivity, commitment, and patience. Chess has been used to enhance the self-confidence and self-worth in children, especially in young girls. These are just some of the qualities that in most cases have not been reached by traditional educational methods and means.

Among the educational benefits are improved mental discipline and better planning skills. Chess educators have argued that chess is beneficial, not just for the intellectually gifted, but also for the learning disabled and hyperactive children.

Jennifer J. from Winnipeg, Canada: I have heard many people say that you were the first woman to earn the men's grandmaster title. Is that true?

Yes, I was the first woman who broke the gender barrier to earn the grandmaster title. What that means is I earned my three grandmaster norms in tournament play like other male players. Approximately one year after I earned my grandmaster title in 1991, my sister Judit earned her grandmaster title and my good friend Pia Cramling from Sweden earned it after Judit. Judit was also the youngest grandmaster at that time, breaking Bobby Fischer's long-time record. Recently, two new women have earned the grandmaster title. They are Antoaneta Stefanova of Bulgaria and Humpy Koneru of India.

There are also other women who received the grandmaster title for winning the World Women's Championship such as Nona Gaprindashvili, Maia Chiburdanidze, Xie Jun and Zhu Chen. They are all good champions. I hope many more women can earn this prestigious title in the near future.

Jan from Leipzig, Germany: Can a program like Fritz or ChessBase help me improve in chess?

Absolutely! But they are two different type of software. ChessBase is more of a chess database and organizer and Fritz is a playing program with tutorial features. I think most if not all grandmasters use software like this to aid their preparation. They would be at a big disadvantage without it.

Fritz is a very good program that can help everyone from the beginner level all

the way to Grandmasters and the world's most elite players. It can help each level of player differently. I recommend both. Mig Greengard also has a month column at ChessCafe.com that helps people familiarize themselves with programs like ChessBase and Fritz. Check out his informative column. It is called The ChessBase Cafe.

You can add an opening CD to help you with the opening phase. You can add the 5-piece endgame tablebases to help you with the endgame. Fritz can also help you analyze your games as well as making strong recommendations. Fritz is estimated at around 2800+ FIDE. But you don't have to tackle this super level right from the start. You can start with beginner levels using the handicap feature. Even my 4-year old son knows how to use Fritz and he loves it.

Harold from New York City, New York: Will computers rule chess in the future?

In my opinion, the answer is not a matter of 'if'. It is a matter of 'when'. Right now, the computer is already so much better than human in blitz chess and fast time controls. It is like trying to outdo a calculator. But computers still need to improve in the area of positional chess and complex endgames. When those areas are perfected, there will no longer be any competition anymore. I don't think we should worry so much about that now. Even with the best computers in the world, it won't take anything away from chess. It will only enhance the game. If you are worried about that, you can always try random chess.

The following are a couple of games by some of the top US Women's finishers at the 2003 US Open in Los Angeles. WGM Anna Zatonskih finished as the top woman player and the 15-year old WFM Tatev Abrahamyan finished in 4th place among women.

Haessler, C. (2249) - WGM Zatonskih, A. (2423) [C00]
US Open Los Angeles USA (12), 15.08.2003

1.e4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7 5.Bc4 Ngf6 6.Ng3 Bd6 7.Qe2 0-0
 8.d3 Rb8 9.a3 h6 10.Bd2 b5 11.Ba2 c5 12.0-0 Qc7 13.Rfe1 Bb7 14.Rad1 Rfd8
 15.Bc1 Bc6 16.d4 c4 17.Ne5 Nxe5 18.dxe5 Bxe5 19.c3 Bd6 20.Bb1 Qb7 21.Nh5
 Be7 22.Qc2 Bxg2 23.Nxf6+ Bxf6 24.Qh7+ Kf8 25.Be3 Qc6 26.Bxa7 Ra8
 27.Bc5+ Qxc5 28.Kxg2 Qg5+ 29.Kf1 g6 30.Be4 Rab8 31.Ke2 Ke7 32.Bc6 Qc5
 33.Be4 Qe5 34.Kf3 Qh5+ 35.Ke3 Rxd1 36.Rxd1 Qxd1 White resigns

WFM Abrahamyan, T (2201) - GM Sharavdorj, D (2411) [C02]
US Open Los Angeles USA (8), 11.08.2003

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Qb6 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.a3 Nh6 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 Nf5
 9.Bb2 Be7 10.Bd3 a5 11.Qa4 0-0 12.b5 f6 13.Bxf5 exf5 14.0-0 fxe5 15.dxe5
 Na7 16.Nc3 Be6 17.Nd4 Nc8 18.Rfd1 Bc5 19.Nxe6 Qxe6 20.Nxd5 Nb6
 21.Nxb6 Qxb6 22.Bd4 Kh8 23.Rac1 Bxd4 24.Rxd4 h6 25.Rd6 Rac8 26.Rc4 Qa7
 27.Qc2 Rce8 28.Qc3 f4 29.Rc7 29...Kg8 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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