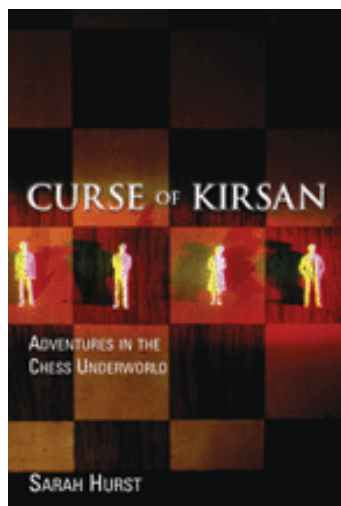




## COLUMNISTS

## Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



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## Scholastic Chess

### Q & A

Scholastic chess is booming in America and scholastic memberships are growing steadily each year. In the past few years attendance records have been set in nearly every national or regional scholastic chess event that I have attended. Kids love chess because it is a cool, fun and challenging game. Parents love chess because it helps their children develop logical thinking skills, concentration, patience, creativity, discipline, self confidence, self esteem, self worth, etc.

Thousands of parents have enthusiastically asked me countless questions about scholastic chess. Below are some of the most important or interesting questions:

***How can I attract my children to the game, maintain their enthusiasm, and make chess fun too? (Veronica J. – New York)***

That is an excellent question, one which has been asked by many parents. First of all, it depends on the ages of the children. From the age of 2 or 3 years old, you can start teaching the children the names of the pieces. Use fun terminologies such as 'Horsie' and 'Castle' rather than Knight and Rook. At the ages of 4, 5 or 6, children can learn the rules of chess and basic puzzles such as checkmate in one, pins, forks, etc. The most important things are to frequently motivate your children and always make it fun and exciting. Reward instead of punish! If they do not find a solution, you can help them with some small hints rather than getting upset or frustrated. If the children enjoy the game from an early age, chances are, they will stay with it for a while. Good luck and have fun with your children!

***Can chess software help my children improve? (Jesus V. –Texas)***

Yes! One of the main reasons why today's children improve at an earlier age is because of chess software. Programs like Fritz & Chester, Fritz, Chessmaster, Majestic Chess, etc., all have fantastic features to educate your children and to keep them busy and excited for a long time. Many of the programs on the market can point out blunders and recommend better moves. In addition, they often offer a database of games that your children can learn from. All in all, they offer plenty of return for a small investment.

***My children know the basic rules of chess and how the pieces move. What is***

***next? (Mary W. –California)***

This is one of the most frequently asked questions. Teach your children fun, exciting and challenging things such as tactics (pins, forks, discovery, etc.), combinations, checkmates, and basic endgame puzzles. These are extremely important areas, which you can give your children some from each category daily. This will keep them from getting bored. My 4-year old is doing up to 50-75 of these puzzles daily. He absolutely loves it and constantly asks for more puzzles. He enjoys them so much that I use them as a reward. The better he behaves each day, the more chess puzzles he gets. I also give him fun stickers when he does a great job solving these puzzles. Therefore, he is constantly motivated!

***Can a chess coach help my children? If so, how do I select a good one? (Aditya K. – New York)***

Yes! A good coach can help a great deal. There are many things a coach can offer that you cannot get from a book or software. It is a challenge to find a good one. Start by looking for a coach who has experience with children and a good record of positive results. Some coaches are good with adults but not with kids. If the coach does not have the patience to deal with children or the ability to connect with kids, it will not work. In addition, it is important to find a coach that genuinely wants to help and does not teach purely for a paycheck. Check their references and ask to speak to the parents of other children they have taught. Of course there is no perfect way to select a great coach. However, if you follow these steps, you should do fine!

***My two daughters really love chess, however; because of the ratio of boys versus girls playing chess (about 10 to 1 in their school) they got frustrated and no longer want to play outside of our home. What do I do? (Jennifer C. –Tennessee)***

Unfortunately, there is no magic wand that can change this instantly. I am trying to correct this problem by creating programs and tournaments specifically for girls. I will post as much information as possible on my website [www.SusanPolgar.com](http://www.SusanPolgar.com) or on the website [www.USScholasticChess.org](http://www.USScholasticChess.org).

Girls and boys approach the game very differently. Many boys see chess as a form of competition and brute force. They want to win at all cost! Many girls view chess as an art form. They are less worried about the results and more concerned with the beauty of the game. I was the same way; I did not perceive chess as an egotistical competition as did many of my male counterparts. I wanted to win just like anyone else, but that was not my top priority. I am happiest when I produce a beautiful, artistic chess game.

Many girls also like to attend different tournaments to meet and make new friends. By understanding girls have different priorities and interests; it may make it easier for parents to motivate their daughters. I have seen many parents who are too preoccupied with the win-loss records for their daughters and that

may not be the way to maintain their interest in the game.

This is also one of the reasons why I like separate classes for some, but not all, girls. It helps them build camaraderie, friendship, self-confidence, and self esteem before competing against the boys. It also improves the chances of girls preserving an interest in chess.

***Is it better to learn chess from books, Internet play, or from computer software? (Anonymous –Ohio)***

There is no single correct method, as all of the above can assist your children. They should learn from books or software and then practice with their friends or on the Internet. Playing alone is not sufficient and there should be a balance between learning and practice.

***How important are chess ratings for children? (Betty W. –Massachusetts)***

My answer may be unpopular but ratings are not very relevant at an early age. The problem is that many parents are so concerned about the ratings their children become too timid to play “proper” chess in order to improve. They are so afraid of losing that they play not to lose instead of playing to win and this can seriously hinder the development of their children. While in the short term ratings can satisfy one’s ego, it is better to look at the long term outcome. If you help your children improve their chess, their ratings will eventually reflect their true strengths.

***Are there regular chess programs on TV that can help kids? (Dexter J. – New Jersey)***

Not that I know of. In fact, there are few chess broadcasts in the US even though there are many chess scenes in various commercials, movies, and TV shows, etc. This demonstrates the trend of chess acceptance and is a very good sign. ESPN recently televised the Kasparov vs. Deep Junior and X3D Fritz in New York City, but that is the extent of it right now.

Good news may be coming in the near future though. There are more than 40 million people who play chess in America and this is a very large market. With the proper programming contents, creative ideas, excellent marketing, and dynamic host(s), it can be a big hit that will give US chess a big boost and bring it to the next level.

***What is your prediction for the future of scholastic chess in America? (Ovid P. –Georgia)***

I have no doubt that many parents will eventually realize the wonderful benefits of chess for children. So will the educators and politicians. I see a very bright

future in scholastic chess in America!

***Beside the Susan Polgar National Invitational for Girls, are there other national scholastic tournaments for girls only? (Joan L. - Iowa)***

The only other national tournament for girls that I know of is the US Junior Open for Girls, which is run by the Kasparov Chess Foundation. This first ever annual event will take place in May of 2004 in Chicago. I will post future details of this tournament on [www.SusanPolgar.com](http://www.SusanPolgar.com) and [www.USScholasticChess.org](http://www.USScholasticChess.org). I will be in attendance along with a few other members of the US Women's Olympiad Program. The Susan Polgar National Invitational is sponsored by the Susan Polgar Foundation and will take place in August in Fort Lauderdale, FL (<http://www.uschess.org/scholastic/polgarscholasticchampionship.php>) along with the Denker Tournament of Champions and the 2004 US Open.

I hope this particular Q&A will benefit many parents and coaches. Thank you for supporting chess and my best wishes to you and your children.

**IM Lahno, K. (2493) – GM Pavasovic, D. (2615)**  
**Corus Group C, Round 4 – January 14, 2004**

**1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 exd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Be7 6. Bc4 0-0 7. 0-0 c6 8. a4 d5 9. exd5 cxd5 10. Bd3 Nc6 11. Bb5 Qc7 12. h3 Rd8 13. Be3 Ne4 14. Nce2 Ne5 15. f3 Nf6 16. b3** Stopping Black from playing ...Nc4 **16...Ng6** In this position, another option for Black is to play a6, trying to trade off White's light-squared Bishop **16...a6 17. Bd3 Nxd3 17. Qd2 Qe5?! I personally prefer 17...Bc5 18. Bd3 Nh5?** Black is trying too hard to create some kind of an attack on the kingside. However, this is not a good plan. Another possibility is **18...Bd6 19. f4 Qe7** followed by ...Ne4 **19. f4 Qc7 20. Rae1 Bd7 21. f5 Ne5 22. g4 Ng3?** This move simply loses material **22...Nf6 23. g5 Ne4 24. Bxe4 dxe4 25. Bf4 Bc5** and the position is unclear **23. Nxd3** **DIAGRAM**



**24. Bf4!** A very nice move, leading to the win of material as we shall see in the next few moves **24...Nxf4 25. Rxe7!** After **25...Nxf3+** **26. Kh2** the Black Knight is trapped.

**25...Qd6 25...Ne6 26. Nh5 Nxd4 27. Qxd4 Qb6 28. Qxb6 axb6 29. f6 g6 30. Nf4±** White is clearly better in this position. Black has too many weaknesses such as the doubled and isolated pawns. White's pieces are more active. The White Knight is much better than the Black Bishop here. White also has a better pawn structure. **26. Rxd7!** Another

very nice move; **26. Ree1 Ne6** and the Black Knight escapes. **26...Nxf3+** Black is trying to grab an extra pawn. However, the Knight is trapped and has no way to retreat. **27. Kg2 Rxd7 28. Kxh3 Re8 29. f6!** This is a very important move to seal the game as it breaks the Black Kingside wide open allowing the Knights, Queen and Rook to penetrate. **29...Qe5 30. fxg7 30. Re1!! Qxe1 31. Qg5 g6 32.**

Qh6 There is no way Black can stop the checkmate threat **30...Kxg7 31. Nh5+**  
**31. Nf3!! Qe6 32. Re1+-** winning more material. **31...Kh8 32. Nf6 Qe3+ 33.**  
**Qxe3 Rxe3+ 34. Kg2 Rd6 34...Rd8 35. Rh1 Kg7 36. Nf5+ Kxf6 37. Nxe3+- 35.**  
**Nf5 Re2+ 36.Kf3** Black cannot avoid losing one of the two Rooks. Game, set  
and match for the young talented Ukrainian girl! A very nice played game! **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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