



New Year Q & A

On behalf of the Susan Polgar Foundation, I would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous 2006! I fully expect it to be a very exciting year for chess. I would also like to personally thank all the supporters of US chess and the Susan Polgar Foundation. I promise we will continue to work hard to promote chess, especially in education and for young people.

Below are my answers to some of the best or most interesting questions I have been asked over the past 12 months:

COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



Breaking Through by Susan Polgar

Jason from New York: Who is the strongest player in 2005 and who do you consider the current World Chess Champion?

There is no doubt in my mind that Topalov has played the most inspiring and best chess in 2005. His achievements include:

- Beating Kasparov in the last round to tie for first at Linares in March, 1½ points ahead of Anand and 2 points ahead of Leko.
- Winning the M-Tel tournament in May, 1 point ahead of Anand and 2½ points ahead of Kramnik. (At the end of this column I have annotated Topalov's ninth round win over Ponomarev.)
- Winning the FIDE World Championship in San Luis in October, 1½ points ahead of Anand and Svidler.

He not only finished above Anand, Svidler, Kramnik and Leko in 2005, he also became the third person in history (after Kasparov and Kramnik) to hit the 2800 mark on the FIDE rating list. And he did it by playing the most aggressive, the most inspiring, and the most dynamic and fearless chess.

Prior to the FIDE World Championship in San Luis, Argentina, I still considered Kramnik to be the world champion. However, when he declined the invitation to compete in San Luis, he lost all rights to any championship claim. When you are the Classical World Champion, you have to prove yourself worthy in tournaments, matches and by rating. Topalov proved himself at the board and on the rating chart. He is the undisputed world chess champion at the moment.

Miguel from Mexico: What are your three most memorable moments in 2005?

I had an incredibly busy year. I released two books (*Breaking Through* and *A World Champion's Guide to Chess*) and six instructional DVDs. I was on the cover of *Lifestyles* and *Parade Magazine*, and I was featured in countless news media outlets such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Daily News*, *Newsday*, *Washington Times*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Elle*, *Psychology Today*, and CBS TV, etc. I opened a second Polgar Chess Center in Corpus Christi, Texas, and, in the first quarter of 2005, I became the #1 rated active woman player in the world, becoming the first American woman to ever accomplish this. Furthermore, I also played more than 2,000 simul games in 2005.

However, my three most memorable moments had to be:

- The “Chess for Peace” event with Anatoly Karpov and former Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev in Lindsborg, Kansas.
- World Record Breaking Simul event in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida against 326 players simultaneously (winning 309, drawing 14, losing 3) and 1,131 games (winning 1,112, drawing 16, losing 3) in nearly 17 hours and walking over 9 miles.
- Awarding more than \$155,000 in scholarships (thanks to UTD for awarding 3 scholarships), stipends and prizes to 48 young female players at the second annual Susan Polgar National Invitational for Girls.

Igor from Russia: What is your opinion of the current state of chess worldwide?

This is a tough question. There are a number of major areas to evaluate. Some of these areas are:

- Popularity of chess worldwide
- Respectability of the game / Earnings for professionals
- Sponsorship and endorsement
- Scholastic chess
- World Championship
- Women's chess

Chess has become much more popular and approximately 700 million people worldwide know how to play. However, it still has not broken into the mainstream.

Professional players continue to have a hard time making a living in chess. Most players do not have sponsorship or endorsements, nor does chess itself. These are areas that sorely need improvement.

On the other hand, scholastic chess is booming worldwide. Governments and educational departments are realizing the countless positive affects of chess on young people. More and more countries and school systems are incorporating

chess as part of the curriculum or after school programs and more children are being introduced to chess at an early age. This is wonderful news, but there is still room for improvement.

The San Luis world championship tournament was a big improvement over the absurd 2-game knockout insanity from the previous few years. However, there still isn't any structured world championship system in place. There were too many changes in recent years and most average people do not know who the reigning world chess champion is. This needs to be fixed. Chess superstars need to be better promoted for the sake of the game.

Women's Chess is still taking a back seat. Grand Slam tennis offers equal money for men and women. Why not chess? In chess women are getting only a small fraction of the men's prize funds. People are very mistaken if they think that ratings increase earning potentials. I am sure there would be a much bigger interest in the mainstream if there were women's chess events on TV instead of men. The problem is chess is still being controlled by men and their egos do not allow them to change this for the benefit of chess.

Overall, chess is doing well and the game is expanding rapidly. However, there is still much work to be done. The other problem is that most national chess federations, as well as FIDE, do not have experienced business people running the show. Therefore, many opportunities are lost.

*Oscar from Brazil: How important is the upcoming FIDE election?
Who would you like to see win?*

This is certainly the most important FIDE election in recent history. FIDE has to be improved drastically. Kirsan Ilyumzhinov has invested lots of money in chess and FIDE, and done many good things for chess. However, I don't think that all that money was spent wisely and many mistakes were made.

The current candidates are:

- Kirsan Ilyumzhinov
- Bessel Kok and Ali Nihat Yazici
- Leo Battesti
- Anatoly Karpov (I am not sure if he has made an official announcement or not)

This FIDE motto is Gens Una Sumus (We are all one family). This is what chess players should live by. Below are some of the key points I will use to make my own evaluation of the candidates:

- Which candidate will follow this motto?
- Which candidate will unite and lead the chess community in the right direction?
- Which candidate will bring chess to the next level of mainstream

popularity?

- Which candidate will bring in corporate sponsorships and help raise the prize funds for professional players?
- Which candidate will do a better job with chess for young players?
- Which candidate will restore dignity and prestige back to the world championship?
- Which candidate will respect women players and listen to their concerns?
- Which candidate will eliminate ugly chess politics and do the right things for chess?

I know all the candidates well with the exception of Leo Battesti. I will ask them tough questions and I will evaluate their answers, then I will make my decision regarding who I endorse. It is premature for me to do so at this time. My endorsement will come only after careful research and thorough evaluation. Only then will it have respectability and credibility.

Gabriella from Tennessee: Will the US have the same team at the upcoming Women's Olympiad in May 2006? Will you play on the 2006 team?

No, I have no idea who will be on the 2006 team. I definitely will not play in 2006, and if dirty politics persist I will not play again in the foreseeable future. I do not have the time and energy to fight all the dishonest chess politicians.

I started the US Women's Olympiad Training Program in 2003 on behalf of the USCF and the Susan Polgar Foundation. I even made one of the most difficult decisions of my life to switch federations in order to represent this country and help US chess. Even with the incredible amount of unprecedented success (1 team Silver medal, 1 individual Silver medal and 2 individual Gold medals – These were first ever medals for the US Women's Team), I was lied to and the program was taken away from the Susan Polgar Foundation without my knowledge.

The deal was illegally and unethically done and a secret contract was signed without my consent, even though I had signed a prior contract with the USCF to run this program. I only discovered, nearly a year later, that the program was committed to another organization and the offer by the Susan Polgar Foundation of \$40K minimum and up to \$60K sponsorship package for the 2006 Women's Olympiad Training Program and Team was rejected.

My offer included a world-class year long training program for the top American female players as well as full sponsorship of the 2006 US Women's Team. The sponsorship package also included much more funding than any other offer, at least 2 to 4 times more. I was told that my proposal cannot be considered or accepted because the USCF had secretly signed a contract the year before. This is rotten politics at its worst and these people had no regards for the best interest of women's chess in America.

The 2006 Olympiad will take place in May. As of right now, there is no training program, nor is there any talk of a training program. Previously, we started training 18 months prior to the last Olympiad and we had about a dozen sponsors. That is why we were so successful, and the 5th member of the training program Rusa Goletiani (who did not make the team) ended up winning the Ladies Continental Championship, US Women's Championship and the Samford Fellowship.

I do not want to hurt the current USCF. This was the action of the past administration. The current staff is working hard to improve the federation and they deserve a fair chance to succeed. Therefore, my only recourse as a player is not to play if the same people continue to run the Women's Olympiad. It is pointless to spend loads of money to send teams without proper preparation. I cannot condone this kind of damaging action by people who have harmed US chess and women's chess. I cannot speak on behalf of the other players. I can only make the decision which I feel is right. I have spent my entire life fighting this sort of thing and I will not stop now.

Alejandro from Florida: What is the best way to promote chess in the United States?

I look at chess promotion in the United States in four different areas:

Scholastic Chess

To succeed in scholastic chess we have to constantly promote the benefits of chess for young people, these benefits include:

Critical thinking, Logical thinking, Reasoning skills, Communication, Decision making, Problem solving, Intellect, Observation, Cognitive skills, Memorization, Self-esteem, Self-confidence, Responsibility, Imagination, Creativity, Concentration, Discipline, Determination, Diligence, Patience, Commitment, Courage, Planning, Pattern recognition, Sportsmanship, Ability to set goals, Ability to learn from mistakes, Ability to strategize, Ability to handle adversity, Math, science and reading skills, etc.

There are plenty of companies and people out there who would support scholastic chess. However, they are not going to come to us. We have to reach out to them.

Women's Chess

This is where I have a big difference of opinion with some other people. I promote the brain and beauty of women players. I promote what chess can do for young girls. I promote chess for women with class and dignity, and the idea that women can accomplish anything they wish if they put their minds to it. I also think that women players can greatly help bring chess into the mainstream. Just look at the media coverage Michelle Wie received. Chess can benefit the same way.

That is why I sponsor events like the Susan Polgar National Invitational for Girls, the Susan Polgar National Open Chess Championship for Girls, the Susan Polgar World Open Chess Championship for Girls, the US Women's Olympiad Training Program, etc. In addition, I was involved with projects such as the World Record Breaking Simul, Chess for Peace Battle of the Gender match with 7-time World Champion Anatoly Karpov, other Battle of the Gender matches against GMs Gulko (won 2-0), Stripunsky (won 2-0), Alburt (draw), Nakamura (draw), etc.

I do not believe in using sex to promote women's chess, which may benefit individual players but definitely not women's chess overall. I also believe that it hurts the credibility of women's chess. I do not believe in using feminism to promote women's chess. I have nothing against feminism, but that has nothing to do with women's chess. I am here to promote chess and not feminism. I will stick to my belief and I will let others do what they think is best for their interests.

Chess in the Media

I disagree with the format ESPN used with Kasparov. I even told them that it would not work well. But they had their own opinion. It is not possible to promote 7 hour chess games on television. As a professional, I would not watch it and I wouldn't expect anyone else to either. It is too long and too boring.

The chess format on TV has to be shortened. It can be done with faster time control or via excellent editing, exciting commentaries, thorough explanations and simple to understand tips. However, there has to be a good plot. Who should the fans root for? It cannot be a broadcast at random without goals or agendas.

Internet TV is another good medium to promote chess. But no matter which way we promote chess, the mainstream audience has to be able to relate to the stars and superstars. That means that chess promotions have to be much better. Every successful major sport promotes their stars like crazy. We do not do that in chess and that is a big blunder.

Relationships

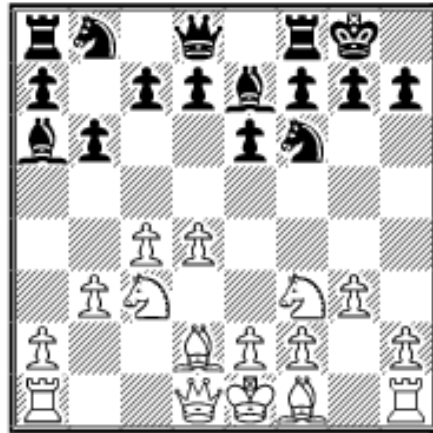
The relationship between the fans and the professional players is an incredibly important part of promoting chess. That is why I have traveled across the country to meet countless chess fans of all ages. In addition, I work very hard to keep an open communication with the fans by creating my own chess [blog](#) site where fans can communicate with me on a daily basis. In addition, I also update the fans with current chess news as well as provide free chess instruction, analysis and tips. This has never been done by any other top-level chess professional. It is hard work to maintain and update the blog daily, but I think it is well worth it.

Once again, I would like to wish everyone a fantastic 2006!

Topalov, V. (2778) - Ponomarev, R. (2695)

M-tel Masters Sofia, BUL (Round 9), 5-21-2005 [E15]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.b3 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 Be7 7.Nc3 0-0



8.Rc1

Topalov played this move in rapid games against Gelfand and Kramnik in Monaco last year. The usual choices would have been 8.Bg2 or 8.e4.

8...c6 9.e4 d5 10.e5

Previously, Topalov tried 10.Bd3 with the same idea of e5.

10...Ne4 11.Bd3

White is willing to allow Black the choice to capture the bishop on d2 or the knight on c3.

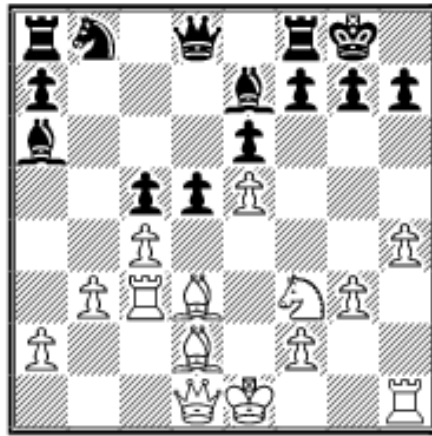
11...Nxc3 12.Rxc3

12...Bxc3 is also fine. White would eventually consider playing h4 and launching a kingside attack.

12...c5 13.dxc5 bxc5

This was all prepared by Topalov. The idea is to leave the king in the center and have the h1-rook support the advance of the h-pawn.

14.h4!



Now White starts his incredible kingside attack.

14...h6

14...Nc6? 15.Bxh7+! Kxh7 16.Ng5+ Kg6 17.h5+ Kh6 18.Nxf7+ and White is completely winning.

15.Bb1

With the obvious idea of Qc2.

15...f5?

According to Topalov, this move loses.

16.exf6 Bxf6 17.Qc2

Topalov is very confident with his position.

17...d4

17...Bxc3 18.Qh7+ Kf7 19.Bxc3 d4 20.Ne5+ Kf6 21.Qe4+-.

18.Ng5!

A brilliant sacrifice that forces Black to open the h-file!

18...hgx5 19.hgx5 dxc3



20.Bf4

20.Rh8+! Kf7 21.Qg6+ Ke7 22.gxf6+ gxf6 23.Rh7+ +- is even more decisive.

20...Kf7 21.Qg6+ Ke7 22.gxf6+ Rxf6 23.Qxg7+ Rf7 24.Bg5+ Kd6 25.Qxf7+-

Black's position is completely hopeless.

25...Qxg5 26.Rh7 Qe5+ 27.Kf1 Kc6 28.Qe8+ Kb6 29.Qd8+ Kc6 30.Be4+ 1-0

If 30...Qxe4 then 31.Qc7# A brilliant win by the FIDE World Champion.

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



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