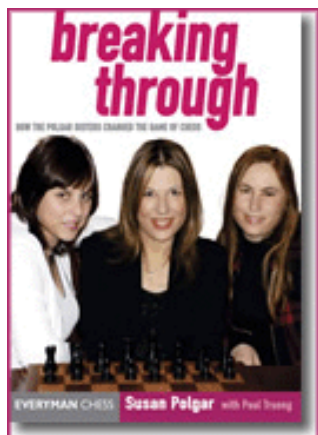




COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



Breaking Through by Susan Polgar

Women's World Chess Cup and Serious Troubles for the USCF

Earlier this year, Mr. Jerry Nash, Scholastic Director of the USCF, contacted me about the Women's World Chess Cup in Dresden, Germany, which was being held from July 7-8, 2006, coinciding with the final weekend of the World Cup Soccer final in Germany, and mirroring the format of the FIFA event. I really liked the idea and I felt that it was a brilliant way to promote chess.



I first visited Dresden when I was about 6-years-old and I had fond memories of it; so returning to this nice city was an attractive prospect. I discussed the idea with my business manager and coach, FM Paul Truong, who also served as my second, and then accepted the invitation to represent the United States. However, deciding to participate is just the first step. What comes next involves plenty of commitment and I had many personal concerns to overcome:

- The schedule is grueling. I would have to play at least 11 games to make it to the final, plus any additional sudden death tie-break game.

- Many of the key participants are from Europe, and for me to come from the U.S., with a six hour time difference, is a handicap.
- I was extremely rusty. With a heavy schedule of teaching, writing, promoting chess and being a single Mom, I do not have that much time to play chess.
- I have never played in a knockout event, which is very different from a Swiss, Round Robin or match format. In a knockout, you can get eliminated by one bad move, so the pressure is much greater.

I take every event very seriously, so I started to train immediately. The first part of preparation is physical fitness, and I needed to ensure that I could handle the grueling schedule.

I also needed a new opening repertoire and to sharpen my tactics into tournament shape. One of the great things about modern technology is that I could get some practice by playing online, which is very convenient for a Mom like me.



Promoting Dresden

The format of the Women's World Chess Cup is as follows:

There were eight groups, with four players from four different countries in each group. These are the same countries as in the FIFA World Cup. The rules stipulated that if a country did not send a player, the German Chess Federation could appoint a German player to represent any absentees.

The first round was staged as a round robin. The two top countries in each group (in bold in the table below) proceeded to the knockout stage. In case of a tie, a tiebreak game would be played.

Group A	
IM Martha Fierro	Ecuador

IM Elisabeth Pähtz	Germany
IM Monika Socko	Poland
Filiz Osmanodja	Costa Rica
Group B	
GM Pia Cramling	Sweden
IM Harriet Hunt	England
Chantal Fitzpatrick	Trinidad/Tobago
Gabriela Vargas	Paraguay
Group C	
GM Peng Zhaoqin	Holland
WGM Carolina Lujan	Argentina
IM Alisa Maric	Serbia/Montenegro
IM Ketino Kachiani-G	Ivory Coast
Group D	
WIM Catarina Leite	Portugal
Paulina Carreras	Mexico
WIM Shadi Paridar	Iran
WGM Vera Jürgens	Angola
Group E	
IM Jana Jackova	Czech Rep.
IM Elena Sedina	Italy
GM Susan Polgar	USA
Elena Winkelmann	Ghana
Group F	
WIM Myoko Watai	Japan
Suzana Chang	Brazil
WIM Vlasta Macek	Croatia
WIM Anastasia Sorokina	Australia
Group G	
WIM Jessica Nill	Togo
IM Marie Sebag	France
WIM Gundula Heinatz	Switzerland
No Player	South Korea
Group H	
No Player	Saudi Arabia
WGM Monica Calzetta Ruiz	Spain

Judith Fuchs	Tunisia
WGM Anna Ushenina	Ukraine

Both my second and I agreed that it would be best to qualify to the next stage using as little energy as possible, which meant that it did not matter if I qualified in the #1 or #2 spot. I succeeded and gained an extra hour to rest.



Pähtz, Polgar and Cramling

Following this round, the organizers took all the players out to a private dinner in a very unique and beautiful medieval style restaurant, where there was a special menu prepared. The food was fantastic and everyone enjoyed themselves, including those who were eliminated. Of course, many of the players, myself included, returned to the hotel immediately after dinner to have a full night of rest for the next day.

IM Elisabeth Pähtz	1½-½	GM Pia Cramling
IM Harriet Hunt	0-2	IM Monika Socko
IM Ketino Kachiani-G	1½-½	WIM Catarina Leite
WGM Carolina Lujan	2-0	WGM Vera Jürgens
IM Elena Sedina	1-1*	Suzana Chang
GM Susan Polgar	2-0	WIM Vlasta Macek
IM Marie Sebag	1-1*	Judith Fuchs
WIM Gundula Heinatz	0-2	WGM Anna Ushenina



WGM Carolina Lujan

In the quarterfinals, WGM Carolina Lujan from Argentina upset the third highest rated player, IM Monika Socko. Carolina is very good in rapid chess and she was very tough mentally. Also, there was not a single draw during this round.

IM Elisabeth Pähtz	2-0	IM Ketino Kachiani-G
Suzana Chang	0-2	IM Marie Sebag
WGM Carolina Lujan	2-0	IM Monika Socko
WGM Anna Ushenina	0-2	GM Susan Polgar

In the semifinal, IM Pähtz defeated IM Sebag and I defeated WGM Lujan.

IM Elisabeth Pähtz	1½-½	IM Marie Sebag
WGM Carolina Lujan	½-1½	GM Susan Polgar

In the match to decide third place, IM Sebag lost the first game with the white pieces, but fought valiantly to win the second game, as well as the sudden death playoff to capture the Bronze.

IM Marie Sebag	1-1*	WGM Carolina Lujan
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This left the hometown hero, IM Elisabeth Pähtz, and I in the championship match, which was a dream scenario for the organizers. The German media had a field day with this match-up.

Pähtz had the home-field advantage, especially as her father, a grandmaster, was there as her coach, and other dignitaries were there to lend moral support, including Uwe Boensch, German GM Raj Tischbierek (editor of *Schach*

magazine), and the legendary Wolfgang Uhlmann. Meanwhile, I only had one person in my corner, FM Paul Truong.

As Black, I had very serious winning chances in the first game, but I failed to convert it. This is one of the problems with the faster time control, as it is hard to come up with perfect plans. Pärtz found a strong defense to hold on for a draw.

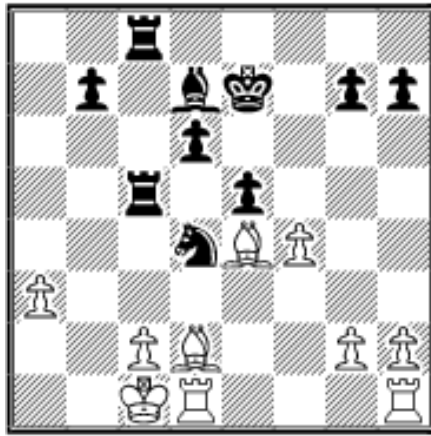


In the second game, she completely surprised me by employing the Dutch Defense, which was a good strategy, as I had not prepared for this against her. I chose a very unusual line to avoid her preparation and the game lasted about 80 moves. In the end, my endgame technique helped me capture the Women's World Chess Cup for the United States.

GM Susan Polgar (2577) – IM Elizabeth Pähtz (2456)

World Women's Chess Cup, Dresden, Germany (Championship Game), July 8, 2006 [A80]

1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 f5 3.d5 After being surprised with the Dutch, I decided to return the favor by playing an obscure line. **3...Nf6 4.dxe6 dxe6 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Nc3 Bb4 7.Bd2 Ke7 8.a3 Bc5 9.b4 Bd6 10.Nb5 Ne4 11.Be3 a5 12.Nxd6 cxd6 13.bxa5 Rxa5 14.Nd2 Nxd2 15.Bxd2 Rc5 16.0–0–0 Nc6 17.e3 Bd7 18.f4 Rc8 19.Bd3 e5 20.e4 fxe4 21.Bxe4 Nd4**



22.fxe5 [22.Bb4?! Rxc2+ 23.Bxc2 Rxc2+ 24.Kb1 Bf5] **22...Rxe5** [22...Rxc2+ 23.Kb1!] **23.Bg5+!** Rxc2 **24.Rxd4** g6? [24...Bc6] **25.Bxb7** Rc3 **26.Re1+ Re5** **27.Rde4** Rc7 **28.Ba6** Kf6 **29.Rf1+ Bf5** **30.Bd3** [30.Rxe5 dxe5 31.g4 Rxc2+ 32.Kd1 Ra2 33.gxf5 gxf5] **30...Kg7** **31.Rd4** [31.Rxe5 Bxd3 32.Ree1 Rxc2+ 33.Kd1 Rxc2 34.Re7+ Kh6 35.Rff7 g5] **31...Bxd3** **32.Rxd3** Re2 **33.Rd2** Re3 **34.Rxd6** Rxa3 **35.Rfd1** I was hoping to trade a pair of

rooks. Now a long series of maneuvering moves ensued: **35...Raa7** **36.R6d3** Rab7 **37.c3** Ra7 **38.R1d2** Kh6 **39.Kc2** Ra3 **40.Kb2** Ra5 **41.Rd4** Rb7+ **42.Rb4** Rba7 **43.Rh4+** Kg7 **44.Rhd4** Ra2+ **45.Kb3** R2a3+ **46.Kc2** Ra2+ **47.Kd1** Ra1+ **48.Ke2** Kh6 **49.Rd7** R7a5 **50.R7d5** Ra6 **51.Kd3** Rc1 **52.Rd4** Ra3 **53.Rc4** Ra7 **54.Re2** Rd1+ **55.Kc2** Rda1 **56.Rh4+** Kg7 **57.Rhe4** Kh6 **58.h3** R1a2+ **59.Kd3** R2a3 **60.Re7** R7a6 **61.R2e4** Rc6 **62.Rc4** Rd6+ **63.Rd4** Rc6 **64.Rh4+** Kg5 **65.Rc4** Rd6+ **66.Ke3** h5 **67.h4+** Kf6 **68.Rec7** Re6+ **69.Re4** Rd6 **70.Rc5** Ra2 **71.Rf4+** Ke6 **72.Rg5** Kd7 **73.Rd4** Raa6 **74.Rxc6** Rxd4 **75.Rg7+** Ke6 **76.cxd4** 1-0



After the awards ceremony, there was a final dinner at the Dresden Athletic Club, where the soccer match between Germany and Portugal was televised; and each time there was an exciting play, you could hear the roar from thousands of Germans in nearby restaurants and bars. There was so much excitement in the air and you could actually feel the ground shake whenever

Germany scored. After the German's won, thousands of people took to the street to celebrate. It was quite a sight to see.

IM Elisabeth Pähtz	1/2-1 1/2	GM Susan Polgar
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In the knockout stage, I scored 4 wins with White, 2 with Black, and 2 draws for a final score of 7/8. It really felt good to know that, after being inactive for two years, I can still compete against players half my age. It also proves that proper training and preparation are essential components of tournament chess, and to never underestimate the power of physical fitness.



I would like to thank the organizers of this event, headed by Dr. Dirk Jordan, Mr. Bernd Salewski and many others, who all did a magnificent job. They will also be organizing the 2008 Chess Olympiad, which I expect will be equally spectacular. Special thanks to the USCF for giving this chess Mom an opportunity to represent the United States.

Serious Troubles for the USCF

Back in 2003, the USCF had about 98,000 members and this number has now dwindled to 78,000. As I have mentioned before, the current structure of the USCF will destroy this federation. With all due respect to the board members (and many are my friends), they are volunteers and most of them *do not* have the proper experience to be making multi-million dollar decisions that can affect the entire federation. Many have never owned a business nor have any type of high level management experience.

Some of these people fight to keep their positions to feed their egos and promote personal agendas. They have no new ideas, no passion or desire, and no plan to do anything positive for the USCF. At the same time, several individuals have openly cursed and insulted those who disagree with them, and some have openly rooted for U.S. Olympiad teams to fail. I am embarrassed to see such appalling behavior. It is shameful for a major chess federation like the USCF to sink this low.

Board members are there to make policies, not the day-to-day decisions of the federation. Their job is to hire qualified personnel and then get out of the way; you cannot micro-manage the personnel. I strongly urge the USCF to change its current structure before it is too late. The current structure is *not* working! We have lost 20,000 members.

Here are some of the things the USCF desperately needs:

- A Marketing and PR department – We cannot allow inexperienced people to negotiate with potential sponsors and supporters, etc. When we have board members negotiating deals, we may end up with another “Natrol” fiasco.
- A serious code of conduct for USCF personnel, including board members, employees, delegates, committee members and chairs, etc. – A glaring example of what is wrong is the open letter by a board member about the recent FIDE election. These people are an embarrassment to the USCF and should be dealt with swiftly.
- More cooperation with sponsors and supporters – The USCF has ruined the relationship with too many sponsors and supporters in the past. This has to stop. Personal interests should be set aside for the sake of chess.
- More cooperation with professional players to promote chess – Many top players make good role models for young children, and they are ready, willing and able to help the USCF free of charge.

The level of hatred, vindictiveness and pettiness within the USCF has reached an all-time low. The constant bickering and backstabbing is destroying the organization and U.S. chess.

A Troubling Election

The 2006 Executive Board election is officially over, and Randy Hough and Sam Sloan have been elected to the Executive Board pending certification. The former has a long and distinguished record promoting chess in America.

However, as far as the latter is concerned, immediately following the announcement of the official results, one of the current board members wrote:

The United States Chess Federation is reaching the lowest point in its political history. For many years, Sam Sloan used to attack board members, and his credibility has been enhanced by “chess people” who leaked information to him for their own purposes. The results of this election makes us wonder about the wisdom of the one member/one vote, as well as our effectiveness to attract good people to run for the Executive Board. The USCF “Rome” is burning!

I am seriously concerned about this election and the state of the United States Chess Federation. Sam Sloan has repeatedly attacked me and has refused to retract his statements, even after they were refuted by USCF President Bill Goichberg and VP of Finance Joel Channing.

A few weeks ago, Sloan publicly stated that he was the business manager for the Polgar sisters. This is a total fabrication. I appreciate that he helped us on a few occasions when we were very young, but at no time was he our business manager. After having been defeated many times in the past when he ran for a seat on the board, Sloan apparently succeeded this time, helped in part by cleverly manipulating smoke and mirrors to confuse and hide past conduct that many would find highly objectionable.

Yet, according to Sloan himself, "Leroy Dubeck (Past President of the USCF and the NJ State Chess Federation) called a Special Meeting of the New Jersey State Chess Association just to announce that he was supporting me for election to the Executive Board and to recommend that the association endorse me for election, which it did."

Dubeck's bad joke put over on the federation's voting members has become unfortunate reality. This is the state of chess in America! Does any sane observer of the current sad state of affairs truly believe that this will enhance and improve both the USCF and the prospects for a successful future?

I believe that we should do everything we can for the best interest of the game we love. I will fight for the honesty, integrity and grace of our sport. I hope that the USCF Executive Board members and delegates will do the right thing to protect the USCF.

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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