



COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar
on
Chess
Susan Polgar



Breaking Through
by Susan Polgar

Tips for Promoting Chess

I firmly believe that the poor marketing and promotion of chess has hindered the growth of organized chess in the United States, and I would like to share with you some questions that were recently asked by J. LeMoine, J. Sanchez and B. Higgins. These questions were directed to FM Paul Truong, one of the most successful people in chess marketing and promotion.

What are some of the things that local clubs and organizers can do to help promote their clubs or events?

Contact the local media (newspapers, radio, TV networks, school papers, etc.) and let them know what is going on at your chess club or event. Explain to them:

- Why your event is interesting and what makes it unique.
- Talk about noteworthy players that participate in your event, such as a local politician, a community leader, a top rated young player, or a chess celebrity such as a national champion, etc.
- Discuss interesting aspects such as mixed doubles events, sibling teams, family teams, oldest vs. youngest match-ups, male vs. female, students vs. teachers and so on.

If you do not pique their interest, the media will not turn up. In addition, have a press kit or information packet ready. The easier you make their jobs, the more likely they are to cover your story. You can also prepare a story about the event and submit it to your local newspapers.

After the story is out, make sure you thank the journalists that covered the event. Be sure to recognize their role in making your event more special. Also, the more feedback they receive from their viewers or readers, the more likely they will be to cover other events you organize. Keep in touch with the journalist and create a bond.



Fountain Square with giant TV in background

What is a Press Kit and what should it include?

A press kit is a package of important information with facts and interesting tidbits about your club or event. It should also contain clear, high-quality pictures – the higher the quality, the better! Also be prepared to provide the pictures and data on a CD or via electronic means. This will save the journalist time and they will be more likely to get the facts and information right.

Here are some of the things to include in a press kit:

- An information sheet about your club or event. Include basic facts, such as when and where, and give a little history of the club or event. If your event has already received attention from other sources (the Internet, other newspapers, etc.) mention that together with the Internet address or source. This helps reinforce the message that your activity is newsworthy.
- A contact sheet listing the key officers and how to contact them for further information. Give a brief description of each person listed.
- The Press Release. This should be the top page in the press kit, with the heading: “Press Release” or “For Immediate Publication.” Use preprinted stationery if you have any. Otherwise, place the name, address, and contact number of your organization at the top. Now pretend that you’re the journalist writing the story. You write the story. Lead with the most important information. Continue to write the rest as a newspaper story.

The purpose of a press release is to summarize the story for the press. Again, it must be done interestingly enough so that they would want to cover it. A press kit is easy to create and very effective.



Fairview German School

What can local clubs or promoters do to obtain sponsorships?

Ask yourself: Why should someone sponsor your club or event? And be prepared to answer this question. If you are not, then you will have very little chance of getting any kind of sponsorship.

It is very seldom that a person or company sponsors an event just because the event needs money. If it does not make sense to them, it will not happen. Show the potential sponsors what you expect from them and what they can get in return. Here’s an example:

Thorough research has proven that chess helps children do better in school and in life. For as little as \$1,000, your company can make a positive difference for 100 children in our community. This money will be used to organize the XYZ Scholastic

Championship, the most prestigious chess competition in our city.

In return, your company banner will be prominently displayed in the tournament hall during the entire tournament. A display ad of your company will also appear in our tournament program book, as well as on the official tournament website, which will be viewed by thousands of people in our community.

In short, why should any person or company sponsor your club or event? It can be a number of reasons, but here are two possibilities:

- They are doing something good for the community or the local children
- They are getting their money's worth in recognition and publicity



Fairview German School Simul

What are some of the do's and don'ts for approaching the media?

- Do make it simple and easy to understand.
- Do explain why they should cover chess.
- Do prepare all information and facts in advance.
- Do have a media/press kit.
- Do cooperate anyway you can to make their job easier.
- Do be polite.
- Do follow up.
- Do keep in touch.
- Do be positive.
- Don't make it too complicated.
- Don't be unprepared to give facts and information.
- Don't be a pain.
- Don't be too vague.
- Don't be rude.
- Don't forget to follow up.
- Don't be negative.



Country Day School Simul

What assistance can a local club or promoter expect from the United States Chess Federation?

Right now, very little if anything. The USCF has no such department and no person who can devote time to help in this capacity. You are basically on your own when it comes to chess promotion or marketing. I hope this will change in the near future.

Do chess clubs or organizers need to hire a Marketing and PR firm?

If you have the budget, why not? If done properly, it can work like a charm. However, most chess clubs and organizers do not have this kind of budget. The good news is that anyone can promote their clubs or events by just following the steps outlined above. The most important thing is ask yourself the following question:

If I am the media or a casual player, what would it take to get me excited enough to come and join the club or cover the event?

Do not take anything for granted. The worst thing to do is not do any promotion whatsoever.



Three Hundred Board Simul

What should I do if I invite the media and they don't come?

Even if you try your best, it does not guarantee success. If the media did not cover the event,

contact them afterwards and let them know the exciting things that happened during the event. Offer to submit a story about it.

Also, be persistent and follow the same steps for the next event. Modify your strategy and present things from a different angle. After a while, you will learn what works and what doesn't. But once you establish that relationship, the results can be phenomenal. Good luck!

Confusion with the April 2007 FIDE rating list

As I reported last [month](#), Anand and Carlsen were leading Morelia/Linares after nine rounds. In the end, Anand pulled away and won this super-tournament by a full point.

Here are final standings:

- Viswanathan Anand, IND (2779) 8½
- Magnus Carlsen, NOR (2690); Alexander Morozevich, RUS (2741) 7½
- Peter Svidler, RUS (2728); Levon Aronian, ARM (2744) 7.0
- Vassily Ivanchuk, UKR (2750) 6½
- Veselin Topalov, BUL (2783); Peter Leko, HUN (2749) 6.0

Because of these results, it was expected that Anand would top the April FIDE rating list. However, FIDE failed to include the Linares results on the April list, even though they have done so in past years. Here is the statement from FIDE:

Elista FIDE Office reminds all National Chess Federations that the deadline for submission of tournament reports for the April 2007 FIDE Rating List is 28 February 2007. Reports received late will be rated for the next list, July 2007. National Federations, Rating Officers and Arbiters are requested to check the list of Tournament Rating Reports received from their respective countries for the 1st April FIDE Rating List. Please inform Elista FIDE Office of corrections, if any.

However, the All India Chess Federation protested as follows:

The All India Chess Federation has taken up the rating issue of the Morelia/Linares Chess Tournament with FIDE, the World Chess Body for excluding the World's Premier event from the April 2007 rating list. The AICF has requested FIDE to follow normal norms and rate this event as was done before. Viswanathan Anand had won this event and rating it would make him the No.1 in the World Ranking list as of April 1, 2007.

FIDE had published the list of events rated for the April 2007 list and had excluded the Morelia/Linares event. The AICF has asked FIDE to rate this event as done in the past 15 or more years. The Linares Tournament has been traditionally been included in all rating lists published by FIDE in April and excluding it this time will be injustice to Indian chess and Viswanathan Anand.

Including the Morelia/Linares Tournament will pull down Veselin Topalov (who finished last at Linares) and Viswanathan Anand would be the No.1. Viswanathan Anand himself is in Germany playing the Bundesliga for defending champion Baden Baden and was not available for comment. The AICF Secretary D.V.Sundar has taken up the issue with FIDE and expects the correction by FIDE as early as Monday.

According to ChessBase, FIDE will rate the Morelia/Linares event. If this is so, then Anand will become the #1 player for the first time in his career. Here are the top ten players at the moment:

- Veselin Topalov, BUL (2791)
- Viswanathan Anand, IND (2778)
- Vladimir Kramnik, RUS (2772)
- Levon Aronian, ARM (2759)
- Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, AZE (2757)
- Alexander Morozevich, RUS (2756)
- Peter Leko, HUN (2749)
- Teimour Radjabov, AZE (2747)
- Vassily Ivanchuk, UKR (2735)
- Michael Adams, ENG (2734)

On the women's side, my sister Judit remains at #1. Humpy Koneru, whom I have been predicting will be a future Women's World Champion remains at #2, but her rating increased to 2575, while Pia Cramling is in the #3 spot at 2535.

The top five Americans are:

- Gata Kamsky, USA (2705)
- Alexander Onischuk, USA (2663)
- Hikaru Nakamura, USA (2658)
- Yasser Seirawan, USA (2642)
- Jaan Ehlvest, USA (2640)

Queen City Classic in Cincinnati

I spent the last few days promoting chess at the Queen City Classic in Cincinnati, Ohio. This event was organized by the Cris Collinsworth ProScan Foundation. Cris Collinsworth was a pro-bowl wide receiver for the Cincinnati Bengals and one of the most well-known football commentators and analysts in the country. Co-founders of the foundation are Penny and Dr. Stephen Pomeranz, one of the foremost experts in MRI technology.



Analyzing with Cody Pomeranz

My first stop on Thursday was at the Country Day school. I gave a short talk to about one hundred children, followed by a small simul. Next was the Fairview German Language School. This school has over one hundred members in the school chess club! I once again gave a short talk and a simul. I was amazed at the enthusiasm and the love for chess shown by these children.

On the next day, I gave a thirty board simul at an amazing location: the Fountain Square in downtown Cincinnati. The event was broadcast live on a giant screen TV! This generated plenty of interest with passersby; thousands of people stopped to check out the action.



Blindfold Blitz Chess

On Friday evening, GM Maurice Ashley, GM Gregory Kaidanov and local masters joined me at Paul Brown Stadium, home of the Cincinnati Bengals for the pre-tournament festivities. The event kicked off with a blindfold blitz game between Kaidanov and Ashley. It was a well-played but intense game. In the end, Ashley lost on time by twenty-three seconds in an eventful endgame.

The blindfold game was followed by a three hundred board simul conducted by the three GMs and some local masters. Since this was my first year, I had the honor of taking on the largest group of fifty-two boards. It was a fantastic event and the kids thoroughly enjoyed it. We also signed autographs and posed for countless photos with players and their families.

Saturday morning was the main event at the Queen City Classic. Around seven hundred young players took part in this very exciting tournament. It was also held at the beautiful Paul Brown stadium. This is a spectacular place to hold a chess tournament. During the rounds, we did live commentary on two of the top boards.



Three GMs and Penny and Dr. Stephen Pomeranz

All the festivities were very well-organized. There were over sixty volunteers at the tournament. The idea for the event came from the Pomeranz children, who told their parents it would be cool to have a big chess event for kids in Cincinnati. Today, it is one of the largest scholastic events that is not organized by the USCF or a state affiliate. My special thanks to all the volunteers and staff, especially Reba Dysart, and Penny and Dr. Stephen Pomeranz for making this event so special for so many children, their families and coaches.

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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