



COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



Breaking Through by Susan Polgar

A Big Month for Chess

On May 12, 2007, an extraordinary event took place in Lubbock, Texas. I was invited by the President of Texas Tech University to give two commencement addresses to the graduating class of 2007. I have done countless speeches over the years; the largest was to a crowd of about 5,000. But at the United Spirit Arena at Texas Tech the crowd numbered nearly 25,000!

This was intimidating to say the least. Moreover, my speech was taped for broadcast by C-SPAN. Talk about pressure! But I knew that this was a very important occasion for chess, so it was well worth it. Here is the [link](#) to my second commencement speech, and here is some [information](#) about the entire event.

Immediately after the conclusion of my first commencement address, Texas Tech President Whitmore asked Chancellor Hance and Regent Miller to join us at the podium. I did not realize what was about to happen, but they awarded me with an honorary Doctoral Degree from Texas Tech. It was quite an honor for me and the entire chess community.

After the graduation ceremony concluded, I was escorted to the press room for a monumental announcement that I believe will affect the chess community for years to come. Joining me were Texas Tech President Jon Whitmore, Provost Bill Marcy and Senior Vice-Provost Jim Brink. The announcement was to introduce the Susan Polgar Institute for Chess Excellence (SPICE). This will be the first center of its kind in the world.

Our motto is Academic Excellence through Chess

Through SPICE, Texas Tech has focused the resources of a major university and Big 12 Conference member on providing scholarships for chess players, conducting research into various aspects of the game, championing scholastic, college and women's chess and housing an outreach program bringing chess to enthusiasts of all ages.

Here is the vision for SPICE:

- It will become the premier center for chess education, research, technology, and outreach in the nation.
- It will help attract outstanding undergraduate and graduate students to TTU/HSC.
- It will provide a substantial amount of scholarships to chess players.
- It will be a world-leader in promoting women's chess.
- It will support the nation's most elite chess programs.

The SPICE Mission

- To promote chess as vehicle for enriching education.
- To serve as the global center for chess research, education and development.
- To support and promote competitive chess at the college level.
- To recruit outstanding undergraduate and graduate students.

There are plans for much bigger projects, but we are not here to compete against any other universities or colleges. The goal of SPICE is to work with our friends and colleagues to enhance chess, education, technology, research, etc. Many more major announcements will be forthcoming.

I strongly believe that College Chess is a critical bridge between Scholastic and Adult Chess. If we can successfully promote College Chess, we will retain many more scholastic players and transition them to Adult Chess. Chess as a sport has plenty of room to grow. Therefore, it is vital that we work together and assist each other for the best interest of our sport.

The 2007 Frank K. Berry US Championship

After the AF4C withdrew its sponsorship for the US Championship, Frank K. Berry, a chess patron from Stillwater, Oklahoma stepped in to save the day by sponsoring this year's event.

I met Frank and his twin brother Jim at the 2003 US Open in Los Angeles, California. If you meet ever meet them, you will immediately feel their passion for chess. Frank has organized countless local events, he brought the 2004 US Women's Olympiad Training Squad to Stillwater, Oklahoma for a special training event, and he sponsored the NY City Mayor's Cup, the highest rated round robin chess event in US history, which was organized by my foundation. He also supported the Susan Polgar National Invitational for Girls and the Susan Polgar Foundation.

The championship started out as a runaway event for GM Shabalov. He began with five straight wins against IM Sakar, GM Gurevich, GM Ibragimov, GM Nakamura and GM Kaidanov! In round six, Shabalov was stopped by the defending champion GM Onischuk. By round seven, there was a two-way tie for first between these two, and they remained tied until the last round.

Shabalov had white against Kudrin, while Onischuk had white against Gulko. Onischuk could not muster a win over the veteran Gulko, so that left the door open for Shabalov to capture his fourth US Championship title.

- 1. Alex Shabalov 7
- 2. Alex Onischuk 6½
- 3-5. Gregory Kaidanov, Yury Shulman and Julio Becerra 6

By finishing in the top five, these grandmasters qualified for the next World Championship cycle. Full standings can be found [here](#).

It was an exciting tournament and two IM norms were made by Texans FM Joe Bradford and FM Michael Langer. Joe had to beat IM Irina Krush with the black pieces and Michael had to draw GM Dmitry Gurevich with the white pieces to qualify for their IM norms.

Congratulations and special thanks are in order to Mr. Frank K. Berry for sponsoring the US Championship. Also congratulations to Alex Shabalov for winning his fourth national title!

Super M-Tel Tournament

The 2007 M-Tel Masters tournament took place in Sofia, Bulgaria from May 10-20. The format was a six person double round robin event. After starting out in last place, Veselin Topalov staged yet another miracle comeback; he surged in the second half and won the event outright by beating the event leader Sasikiran in the final round. Gata Kamsky, the #1 player in America, came very close to winning this prestigious event, finishing in a four-way tie for second.

Here are the final standings:

- 1. Topalov 5½
- 2-5. Kamsky, Mamedyarov, Nisipeanu, Sasikiran 5.0
- 6. Adams 4½

The Candidates' Matches in Elista

This year's World Championship will be held in Mexico City with eight players. The format will be a double round robin event, just as in San Luis a few years ago. The event will be held from September 11-October 1. The defending World Champion Vladimir Kramnik (RUS) and GMs Vishy Anand (IND), Peter Svidler (RUS), Alexander Morozevich (RUS) have already qualified from the previous World Championships. Four more players will join them after the conclusion of the Candidates' matches in Elista.

Here is the field of sixteen that are fighting for the four remaining spots:

- Levon Aronian (ARM)
- Peter Leko (HUN)
- Ruslan Ponomarev (UKR)
- Boris Gelfand (ISR)
- Etienne Bacrot (FRA)
- Alexander Grischuk (RUS)
- Judit Polgar (HUN)
- Alexei Shirov (ESP)
- Michael Adams (ENG)
- Evgeny Bareev (RUS)
- Vladimir Malakhov (RUS)
- Gata Kamsky (USA)
- Rustam Kasimdzhanov (UZB)
- Sergei Rublevsky (RUS)
- Mikhail Gurevich (TUR)
- Magnus Carlsen (NOR)

Here are the results:

Aronian	7.0 - 5.0	Carlsen
J. Polgar	2½ - 3½	Bareev
Adams	5½ - 3½	Shirov
Gelfand	5½ - 3½	Kasimdzhanov
Ponomarev	2½ - 3½	Rublevsky
Leko	3½ - ½	Gurevich
Kamsky	3½ - ½	Bacrot
Grischuk	3½ - 1½	Malakhov

The most thrilling match was Aronian vs. Carlsen. A year ago, everyone thought that Aronian would win easily. However, Magnus has improved so much and he pushed the #3 rated player in the world to the limit. The first six games ended in a 3-3 tie with each player winning two games. The next four rapid playoff games ended in a 2-2 tie, with Magnus having to win the last game to send it to the next playoff phase. Aronian finally won the last two blitz games to advance.

American Gata Kamsky was thought to have the closest match. His rating was only four points lower than his French opponent Bacrot. The first game was an uneventful draw. However, Gata completely outplayed his opponent in the middlegame to win three straight games and the match.

Here are the matchups for the next round:

- Bareev-Leko
- Grischuk-Rublevsky
- Aronian-Shirov
- Kamsky-Gelfand

USCF Executive Board Election

Since I announced my candidacy for the USCF Executive Board, there have been many unfortunate campaign tactics employed by various candidates and their supporters. I would like to thank the countless number of people who have stood by me and offered their support through these difficult times. I really appreciate it.

We have a strong vision and we will fix the USCF, because we are more qualified, more passionate and more energetic. Let's show them our voice with our votes. Let's unite and do the right thing for US chess and the USCF.

It is disheartening to see what is being done to our sport. After all that I have achieved in chess, I could walk away from this sport and be proud and content. But I owe it to chess and all the people who have supported me over the years to try and fix what's wrong. I owe it to the countless parents who sacrifice so much to give their children valuable opportunities. I owe it to the thousands of players I've met over the years and I owe it to my children as a chess mom.

The current state of our federation is not healthy! The USCF has lost money in nine of the last eleven years! Many sponsors do not want to deal with us. In fact, the USCF lost three potential multimillion dollar sponsors in the past six months alone. In order to turn things around we must demand positive changes by putting the most capable people in place. I would like to rebuild the USCF into a strong, successful and respectable organization. This is why I decided to run in this election. In order for the USCF to prosper, we must:

- Restore respectability, integrity, credibility and professionalism to the USCF.
- Reestablish a sound and balanced budget and create a strong foundation to substantially increase revenues and sponsorships.
- Develop strong cooperation and support for adult, scholastic, collegiate, correspondence and military chess.
- Establish a strong professional marketing and PR system.
- End the petty and destructive politics that have hurt our federation for so long.

In order to achieve these aims, I am endorsing the following candidates:

- FM Paul Truong
- Dr. Mikhail Korenman
- NM Randy Bauer

I took great care to analyze the status of the USCF before I made my recommendation, and I have outlined their qualifications in a previous [column](#). I will continue to discuss issues with USCF members on my blogs [here](#) and [here](#) until the voting process is closed.

But you should not vote for a certain candidate because someone says to. Please analyze all the candidates and vote for those that you believe are the most qualified to help the USCF.

The ballots should be arriving on the back cover of the June 2007 *Chess Life* in the next few days. Just check the boxes for your four (4) candidates, fold, affix a first class stamp and send it back ASAP. The return address is on the ballot envelop. If you do not receive your ballots in the next week or so, please call the USCF and ask for a replacement. The deadline to request a ballot is June 15.

Be sure to vote in one of the most important elections in the history of the USCF. Let your voice be heard. The future of the USCF is in your hands. You have the power to change the USCF for the better.

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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