



Interviews from the World Championship Part One

It was about twenty years ago that I met a special young chess player, whose love and passion for chess was quickly apparent, and given the accuracy, speed and depth of his analysis, he clearly had talent. He even stayed in our home in Budapest, where we analyzed, played and talked about chess.

Today, Viswanathan Anand (known as Vishy to his friends and fans) is the #1 player in the world and is the undisputed world champion. He hails from India, where he trail blazed the way for such young talents as Sasikiran, Harikrishna, Koneru and Negi, just to name a few. He is loved and admired by millions of fans around the world for his special style of chess and his gentlemanly demeanor. He is a product of chess genius, hard work and dedication.

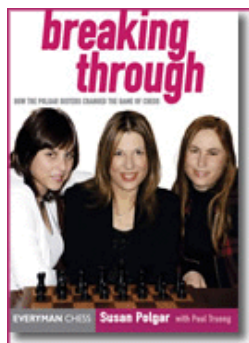
COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar

on

Chess

Susan Polgar



Breaking Through

by Susan Polgar



On September 29, Anand became the new world champion by winning the 2007 World Championship tournament in Mexico City in fine and convincing style, a full point ahead of the next competitor, without a single loss in fourteen games against top-flight competition.

He played the first twelve rounds in top form, but almost suffered a setback in round thirteen against the lowest rated player, Alexander Grischuk from Russia. However, Anand displayed his true champion's spirit and fought hard to earn the half point needed to guarantee at least a tie for first.

In the final round, Vishy only needed a draw to win the world championship for a second time. At the press conference he quoted the late Misha Tal: "When you hand plays one way and your heart plays another, it never goes well, so I decided to play very solid and just go for the draw."

Here are the final standings:

1.	V. Anand (India)	9.0
2-3.	V. Kramnik (Russia), B. Gelfand (Israel)	8.0
4.	P. Leko (Hungary)	7.0
5.	P. Svidler (Russia)	6½
6-7.	A. Morozevich (Russia), L. Aronian (Armenia)	6.0
8.	A. Grischuk (Russia)	5½

Anand's game versus Svidler in round five was critical in that it gave Anand the lead, which he never relinquished.

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V. Anand (2792) – P. Svidler (2735)

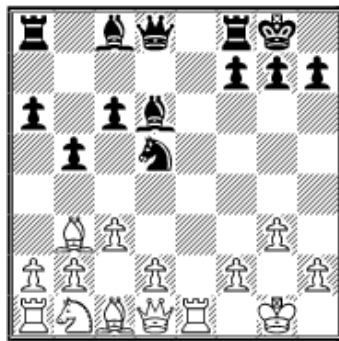
World Championship (5), Mexico 18.09.2007

Ruy Lopez, Marshall Attack [C89]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6

Finally! No Petroff! This was the first game that Black did not employ the Petroff against 1. e4. Instead, we soon have a Marshall Attack, an opening very rich in theory.

3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Rxe5 c6 12.Re1 Bd6 13.g3



The idea behind the Marshall is simple: Black sacrifices a pawn for a big advantage in development and a dangerous attack on the kingside. The problem with the Marshall is that it is so deeply analyzed many lines lead to draws.

13...Bf5 14.d4 Qd7 15.Be3 Rae8 16.Nd2

In this position, Black has to be very aggressive on the kingside. Otherwise, his pawn sacrifice would be proven unsound and Black would have a far inferior endgame.

16...Bg4 17.Qc2

White's idea is to survive Black's onslaught on the kingside and reach a pawn up endgame. Of course, this is not so simple in practice.

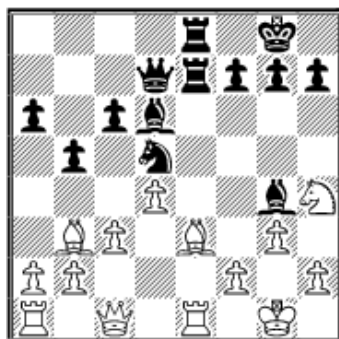
17...Bf5 18.Qc1

Svidler, as black, would not mind repeating moves against the #1 seed, but Anand is not going to waste a game as white.

18...Re7

Svidler spent a lot of time on this move. It is quite logical to double up the rooks.

19.Nf3 Bg4 20.Nh4 Rfe8



Black has good control of the e-file and very coordinated pieces. This is enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

21.Qd2 h6 22.Qd3 g6 23.Bd1

In this position, I would try to break open the queenside by 23.a4. So, I certainly did not expect this move. Black can now capture on e3 or d1 and both are interesting. As usual, Anand was playing



very fast; here he was ahead by about fifty minutes on the clock.

23...Bh3

Svidler declines to trade pieces. This is a key principle when down a pawn. The problem is that White can play Ng2 defending the e3-bishop. Sensing that he has a chance to get an edge, Anand finally took his time for his twenty-fourth move. This is a critical moment, as he has to decide which direction to go. If he can simplify the position, he will be in great shape for the endgame. Svidler's job is to keep the pieces on the board and make the position as sharp and complicated as possible to justify the pawn sacrifice.

24.Bf3 g5 25.Ng2 Bf5

Keeping the position sharp. Svidler had only about thirty-five minutes left to make fourteen moves.

26.Qd1 Nf6 27.a4

Finally! I would have played this a few moves ago, but it is also good here. This was the only plan as far as I can see. White must do something if he wants to win.

27...Ne4 28.axb5 axb5 29.Ra6 Qb7 30.Qa1 Bc8 31.Ra8 Bb8 32.Bc1 Nf6 33.Rxe7 Rxe7



This is now a decisive position for White. As I stated above, White needed to open the a-file to have winning chances. Possible moves for White include Bxc6 and Ne3 sealing the e-file.

34.Qa3

The idea is to play Rxb8 winning a piece.

34...Rd7 35.Ra5

I do not like this move. I prefer keeping the rook on a8. But this is just a matter of taste.

35...Ba7?

35...Bd6 is more accurate; however, White would still have a better position. The bishop simply does not belong on a7.

36.Ne3 Qc7??

The final mistake, after which Black's position is busted. However, even with best defense, Black would still lose. This just brought about a quicker end.

37.Nf5 c5 38.Nxh6+ Kh7 39.Bxg5 1-0



Here are some excerpts of my exclusive interview with Vishy Anand following the world championship.

Susan Polgar: What is your impression of the tournament and its organization?

Viswanathan Anand: It is absolutely superb. At one point Jorge (Saggiante) told me, “Trust me, this one will be special” and he wasn’t kidding. It is the kind of atmosphere that I really like, where your room and the (playing) hall are all in the same place (hotel).

We also have an excellent hotel in the center of town. The playing area was also very ample. There’s a spectator area. There’s an area for the players and there’s an area for the press conference. It’s like there are four or five rooms. And of course the fans here are much more expressive and not reserved. It’s not something you see too often and I really appreciate it immensely. And at the end of the day for a sports person, that is the kind of reaction you are looking for. For many other sports, it is common, but for chess we have a field which is more reserved, and it is very pleasant.

SP: How does your wife help with your career and who else assists you?

VA: In this event, we decided to come with just me, Aruna and Peter (Heine Nielsen). I’m never really keen on more than just one second and I’m very happy with Peter. We’ve now worked together long enough to know each other very well.

I would say they both took care of everything, so literally I do nothing more than pack my laptop, go to the airport, arrive here, unpack my laptop and she takes care of everything else. And that is nice because chess players just want to lose ourselves in chess for a while.

So that was very nice and also I must say that Peter is a fantastic second. He’s really patient. He understands the mood swings you can have during the tournament, when you want to be left alone, when you want to work, and so on. He’s perfect and three of the ideas I used to win here were actually things that he suggested, so he’s a very good second.

SP: How did you get started in chess?

VA: I started when I was six. My mother taught me how to play. In fact, my mother used to do a lot for my chess. We moved to the Philippines shortly afterward. I joined the club in India and we moved to the Philippines for a year. And there they had a TV program that was on in the afternoon, one to two or something like that, when I was in school. So she would write down all the games that they showed and the puzzles, and in the evening we solved them together. Of course my mother and her family used to play some chess, and she used to play her younger brother, so she had some background in chess, but she never went to a club or anything like that.

So we solved all these puzzles and sent in our answers together. And they gave the prize of a book to the winner. And over the course of many months, I won so many prizes. At one point they just said take all the books you want, but don’t send in anymore entries.

SP: What role do computers play in today’s chess?

VA: Well, I think it is like having the best tactical player in the world at your disposal 24/7. Clearly, you have to find a way to use that. And of course as the processors get better, the computer goes a little bit further out. So nowadays, we have engines even suggesting non-tactical moves, simply because they look so far ahead. And I think it is a great help.

But of course you have to make sure that you don’t drown in that information, so you have to keep track of what you do. Essentially, it comes down to the same thing, getting to the heart of the position, some key concepts, and then being able to get to the bottom of things.

For instance, in some of the games here, especially the Moscow variation, you see the influence of the computer as well as its limitations. But it is a very fascinating field. With computers, it allows you to be very productive, but your opponents are as well, so you have to work much harder.

SP: How have you been able to maintain your top level for two decades?

Anand: I think it is basically easy, because chess is fascinating and it is very easy to keep that. And of course when I start to lose it, I take off for a few months and maybe take a vacation and do something else and things usually come back after that.

Sometimes you manage to stop on your own, and sometimes it takes a heavy defeat to stop you. But anyway, usually after you stop for a while, you’ll get it back, as long as you maintain this kind of balance with the right amount of chess. You need practice and you

need to maintain that tournament tension to have that feeling. If you stay away for too long, you lose that and then it is harder to come back.

But if you can sort of manage this kind of balance, it's nice. I like to lose myself in my hobbies as well, like astronomy and traveling. And this is nice because it allows you to put chess in the proper place.

SP: How long have you lived in Spain?

VA: I've been living there since about 1995. But I sort of split my time. I go back to India for one or two months every year. Of course during most of the (tournament) circuit, it is much more convenient to be in Spain, especially for travel purposes.

SP: How many countries have you visited and do you have a favorite?

VA: Actually, I just reached forty-nine. So I am hoping to get to fifty. But I like many places. Last year we went to South Africa and I liked it a lot. I visit many of the traditional places for tournaments like Spain, Holland, and Germany regularly, so it is a different kind of experience. I think it's nice. The world is so diverse you get a different experience. Like when I come to Mexico, that is a very special experience. And then you go back for something else. I think in a way, living a chess player's life allows you to travel quite well.



SP: Can you tell me about the chess in the school's program in India?

VA: We currently have a program called [Mind Champion's Academy](#). It is an idea from the IT company that I work with (NIIT), they already do all the computer education through many schools in many states, so something like 4,000 plus schools, with a total student population of over 1.4 million. And of that, more than 70,000 have played in a competition this year. The nice thing is that we also reach out to non-traditional areas; not only the cities, but small towns and villages as well. So hopefully in five to ten years, we will start to see the effect of this as more and more people enter the chess world.

But the idea for the students is that even if their attraction for chess is limited, we think it is a good tool to help their academics, to develop certain skills and so on. So it is a win-win situation and that's what I'm excited about. Obviously when I come back now, it is a program that I'll continue.

SP: What role does chess play in education?

VA: I think nowadays, children need all the help they can get and generally children learn better in the form of a game. So in that sense, chess has a role because it teaches them problem solving, but in a fun way, because they will reject anything that bores them.

For chess, I think there is an incentive because it will help the sport. But frankly, it is a big help for the schools and it gives the kids something to do. Perhaps it will replace other less healthy alternatives. To give them anything that's fun and positive is good.

I think that's one area where chess will grow, because many countries are doing the same thing, and all based on the theory that chess develops skills that are useful. I think it's something that will prosper.

SP: How many hours do you train before a competition?

VA: Before I came here, I had several sessions between seven to ten days; three in fact. During this session, we work quite hard, close to eight or nine hours a day. And then I stop completely. So the Friday before I traveled to Mexico, I did not look at the chess board at all. I managed to stay completely away from it. At the end, you have to want to play, and if you are sick of analyzing, you'll lose, so you have to maintain it. So when I work, I like to work hard and then stop cold turkey.

SP: How important is physical preparation for an event like this?

VA: I think it is vital, especially because many of the participants here are much younger. You have to compensate a little bit for that. And nowadays, because of tactics, it requires a fair amount of effort during the game. I am not saying that it was trivial earlier, but you have to look for what may be computer preparation on their part. And memory itself can become a problem.

Part Two will feature more from Anand's interview, as well as an interview with Vladimir Kramnik. In the meantime, I will also post video interviews with Aronian, Gelfand, Grischuk, Morozevich, Leko and others at www.ChessDiscussion.com. If you are not a member, you can register for a free account. It will only take about thirty seconds to do so.

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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