



COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



Breaking Through by Susan Polgar

New Year Q & A

1. What were some of the biggest chess moments in the U.S. in 2007? Alex (New York, NY)

The year 2007 was a good one for many of our players. Here are some of the bigger chess moments:

- Gata Kamsky winning the World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk. This is an incredible comeback by Gata.
- Hikaru Nakamura's dominance in Europe earlier this year. Even though Hikaru is an exciting player, he does not receive too many invitations to strong tournaments in other countries. When he got his opportunities this summer, he made the best of his chances.
- Salvijus Bercys, Bryan Smith, Emory Tate, Ray Robson, Joe Bradford earning the IM titles. This is quite a list of young phenoms and experienced chess veterans.
- Jesse Kraai, Renier Gonzalez, Vinay Bhat (conditional of rating) earning GM titles.
- Eugene Perelshteyn winning the SPICE Cup in Lubbock, TX. Even with receiving the invitation without much time to prepare, Eugene led the tournament from start to finish capturing the strongest International round robin invitational in the U.S. in the past five years and in Texas since 1972.
- Alex Shabalov and Irina Krush winning the U.S. and U.S. Women's Championship in Stillwater, OK. Alex once again proved that he is the money player. This is Irina's long overdue second national title and I am sure there will be many more to come.
- Boris Gulko winning the U.S. Open. A magnificent achievement for a chess veteran.
- Daniel Naroditsky's gold and Sarah Chiang's silver at the World Youth Olympiad in Turkey. A magnificent achievement by two talented young players!
- The creation of SPICE, 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 collegiate level, and to recruit outstanding undergraduate and graduate students. This is the first ever program like this in the world.

2. What are Gata Kamsky's chances against Topalov, Anand or Kramnik? Jon (West Palm Beach, Florida)

This is a very good question. When Gata was at his peak in the mid 90s, he challenged Anatoly Karpov for the world championship crown and was the third best player in the world behind Kasparov and Karpov. Many people wrote him off when he attempted a comeback a few years ago. However, Gata proved that he still belongs among the elite.

However, being among the elite and winning the world championship are two different things. In order to defeat Topalov and Anand or Kramnik, Gata needs to train seriously for many months and he needs plenty of help from a team of competent seconds. He cannot do it alone. Unless Gata can raise enough sponsorship to afford seconds and trainers, he will be at a big disadvantage. This is also a problem for many of our top professionals. I think it is

the duty of the USCF to do everything possible to help our players. After all, their success can result in excellent promotional opportunities that directly benefit U.S. chess and the USCF.

3. Who will be the ten best players of 2008? Art (Long Beach, California)

This is a tough question. Here are the top players to start out 2008:

1	Kramnik, Vladimir	RUS	2799
2	Anand, Viswanathan	IND	2799
3	Topalov, Veselin	BUL	2780
4	Morozevich, Alexander	RUS	2765
5	Svidler, Peter	RUS	2763
6	Mamedyarov, Shakhriyar	AZE	2760
7	Shirov, Alexei	ESP	2755
8	Leko, Peter	HUN	2753
9	Ivanchuk, Vassily	UKR	2751
10	Aronian, Levon	ARM	2739
11	Gelfand, Boris	ISR	2737
12	Radjabov, Teimour	AZE	2735
13	Carlsen, Magnus	NOR	2733
14	Karjakin, Sergey	UKR	2732
15	Kamsky, Gata	USA	2726
16	Adams, Michael	ENG	2726
17	Jakovenko, Dmitry	RUS	2720
18	Ponomarev, Ruslan	UKR	2719
19	Cheparinov, Ivan	BUL	2713
20	Alekseev, Evgeny	RUS	2711
21	Grischuk, Alexander	RUS	2711
22	Polgar, Judit	HUN	2707
23	Akopian, Vladimir	ARM	2700
24	Bacrot, Etienne	FRA	2700

I think we can safely predict that Anand, Kramnik, Topalov will be in the top ten throughout 2008. However, the next seven spots are a tough call. Carlsen, Karjakin, Radjabov, and Kamsky all have excellent chances to get into the top ten. And Morozevich, Svidler, Mamedyarov, Shirov, Ivanchuk and Leko are all likely to remain in the top ten.

It will be an exciting year. I am looking forward to two excellent matches: Anand – Kramnik and Topalov – Kamsky.

4. Who is the favorite in the Anand – Kramnik match? Cecil (New Orleans, Louisiana)

This is a tough match to call. Kramnik is known for his tough match play. When asked which format he would prefer, Kramnik said match play because he only needs to win one more game than his opponent. He has a very difficult style to defeat and when he is in the lead, it is almost impossible for his opponent to catch up, as Kasparov and others have found out.

However, I give Anand equal chances in this match. Anand is very experienced and he is very diligent. When I spoke to him in Mexico City, he seemed absolutely determined to win the match and I am sure he will train very hard for it.

5. What does the USCF have to do to make chess more popular without causing a budget crisis? Jaime (McAllen, Texas)

This is an interesting question. The popularity of chess has little to do with the USCF actually. As I stated in an earlier interview, there are a lot more tournament players in the U. S. who are not USCF members than there are members.

However, the USCF is the official governing body of chess in this country. There are many things that the USCF needs to do to be more successful in this regard and I hope to be able to push some of these agendas forward in 2008 if I can get the majority votes of the board:

- **Much more grass roots chess promotion that can help raise much needed USCF revenues.** This is an area where the USCF has failed miserably for many years. The USCF needs to do a lot more promotion regarding the benefits of chess for children and adults. We also need to assist and work with the local and state affiliates to be more successful. This costs little, but can bring big results in return. It can help bring in more members and raise revenues including rating fees from more chess tournaments.
- **Promoting the success of USCF players at all levels.** Chess players are proud of their accomplishments, regardless of their rating. We need to promote this much more and it costs little to do so on the Internet. The problem is the USCF has spent over \$50,000 to redesign the website twice (since it did not work the first time and it is still not working properly after the second redesign). Because of this waste, we are short of funding to maximize the benefit of the USCF website and Internet technology. Other sports and organizations heavily promote their successes and we should do the same.
- **Working closely with chess professionals.** For some reason, many people seem to have an anti-professional player attitude. I have heard countless criticisms and attacks when well known players such as Gata Kamsky, Alex Onischuk, Hikaru Nakamura, Maurice Ashley, etc., receive publicity in the media. In other sports, top players work with their federations or national organizations to promote their sports. This benefits both sides and the USCF should be working much more closely with our most recognized players to help promote the game.
- **More efficient spending of USCF revenues.** This is an area that has haunted this federation for years. In 2007, the USCF spent \$15,000 in Internet insurance for the USCF issues forum, which perhaps has a few dozen regular posters. Around \$10,000 was spent on insurance deductibles. More than \$10,000 was spent on legal fees and this number can potentially be much larger in 2008. It could be as high as a few hundred thousand dollars. As I mentioned above, more than \$50,000 was spent to twice redesign the website. The job was not open for bidding by the most qualified companies and the members ended up paying for these horrendous mistakes. Unfortunately, many decisions are made by the Executive Board and I do not have the majority votes to set the course of this federation. IM John Donaldson

stated recently that the waste could have funded many important chess projects and he is absolutely correct.

There is more that can be done, but these are some of the critical issues.

The Super Russian Championships

The Russian Championship just concluded and Alexander Morozevich is the new champion. He started out with just ½ point in the first two games. Then he reeled off six straight wins against Grischuk, Tomashevsky, Svidler, Sakaev, Rychagov and Timofeev. This is a feat in the league of great players such as Fischer, Kasparov and Karpov.

Here are the final standings of the Super Russian Championship:

1	Morozevich, Alexander	RUS	2755	8
2	Grischuk, Alexander	RUS	2715	7
3	Tomashevsky, Evgeny	RUS	2646	6½
4-8	Dreev, Alexey	RUS	2607	5½
4-8	Inarkiev, Ernesto	RUS	2674	5½
4-8	Vitiugov, Nikita	RUS	2594	5½
4-8	Sakaev, Konstantin	RUS	2634	5½
4-8	Jakovenko, Dmitry	RUS	2710	5½
9	Svidler, Peter	RUS	2732	5
10	Amonatov, Farrukh	TJK	2637	4½
11	Rychagov, Andrey	RUS	2528	4
12	Timofeev, Artyom	RUS	2637	3½

Here are the final standings of the Russian Women's Championship:

1-4	Kosintseva, Tatiana	RUS	2492	7
1-4	Tairova, Elena	RUS	2391	7
1-4	Ovod, Evgenija	RUS	2386	7
1-4	Korbut, Ekaterina	RUS	2443	7
5-6	Pogonina, Natalija	RUS	2462	6
5-6	Kosintseva, Nadezhda	RUS	2469	6
7-8	Matveeva, Svetlana	RUS	2433	5½
7-8	Shadrina, Tatiana	RUS	2379	5½
9	Stepovaia, Tatiana	RUS	2375	5
10	Girya, Olga	RUS	2338	4
11	Kovalevskaya, Ekaterina	RUS	2448	3½
12	Gunina, Valentina	RUS	2359	2½

The following is a game from one of the co-winners:

E. Tairova (2391) – O. Girya (2338)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 5.Nb5 d6



This line started out as a variation of the Sveshnikov (4...Nf6 5.Nc3 e5), but eventually it gained its own life. The main difference from the Sveshnikov is that the g8-knight often ends up on e7 instead of f6. In the “old days,” Black used to play 5...a6 6.Nd6+ Bxd6 7.Qxd6 Qf6 giving up the pair of bishops in return for quick development. However, as practice has shown, White can count on a solid advantage after either 8.Qd1 or 8.Qc7.

6.N1c3 a6 7.Na3 b5 8.Nd5 Nge7

8...Nce7 is another often tried option.

9.c4



This is the most ambitious way to continue. It is important to get the knight back into the action from a3.

9...Nxd5

More common is 9...Nd4 10.Be3 Nxd5 11.cxd5 Be7.

10.cxd5

The game M.Carlsen - T.Radjabov, Wijk aan Zee 2007 continued 10.exd5 Nd4 11.cxb5 Be7 12.Be3

Nf5 13.Bd2 e4 14.bxa6 0-0 15.Be2 Bf6 16.Nc4 Bxa6 with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

10...Nd4

A nice example of White's ideal play is the rapid game Kasparov - Lautier, Moscow 2002: 10...Ne7 11.Nc2 Bd7 12.Bd3 g6 13.0-0 Bg7 14.Be3 0-0 15.Rc1 f5 16.f3 f4 17.Bf2 g5 18.Nb4 Ng6 19.Be2 h5 20.Kh1 Rf7 21.a4 bxa4 22.Nxa6 Nf8 23.Rc6 Rf6 24.Qxa4 Rg6 25.Qb4 Qf6 26.Nb8 Rxb8 27.Qxb8 g4 28.Rc7 gxf3 29.Bxf3 Bg4 30.Qe8 Qg5 31.Rg1 h4 32.h3 Bh5 33.Qf7+ Kh8 34.Rc8 1-0.

11.Bd3 g6

It seems more natural to develop by 11...Be7, with the idea of Be7-g5.

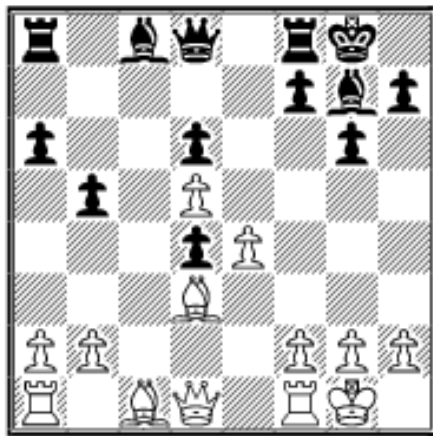
12.0-0 Bg7 13.Nc2

White wisely trades a misplaced knight (on a3) for a beautifully centralized adversary on d4.

13...0-0

After 13...Nxc2 14.Qxc2, White has a small, but steady plus, because of a space advantage and the weakness of the c6-square.

14.Nxd4 exd4



Generally doubling Black's pawns on the d-file is an achievement for White, although in some cases it may become a dangerous asset if Black succeeds to advance. However, we will not see that happening in this game.

15.a4

The idea is to try to create another weakness in Black's position.

15...Bd7

White would be clearly better after 15...bxa4 16.Qxa4 Bd7 17.Qb4, as Black would face difficulties trying to defend all three weaknesses (a6, d6 and d4).

16.axb5 Bxb5

16...axb5 17.Bf4 is no better for Black.

17.Bxb5 axb5 18.Rxa8 Qxa8 19.Bf4

White keeps pressuring all of Black's weak points.

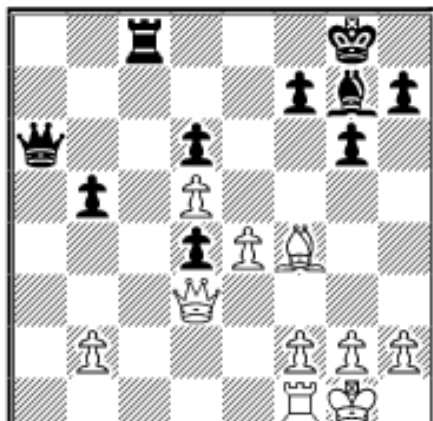
19...Qa6

19...Be5 20.Bh6 Re8 21.Qd3, followed by Rc1, would also be very pleasant for White.

20.Qd3

Now all three weak black pawns are under pressure and White is threatening to get her rook into the game (to the c-file).

20...Rc8



For now it is Black who controls the open c-file.

21.h4

White is provoking another weakness, this time on the kingside.

21...h5 22.Rd1 Rc4 23.Kh2



White is slowly improving her position and optimizing the position of each of her pieces.

23...Bf6 24.Bg3

Preparing f2-f4, followed by e4-e5.

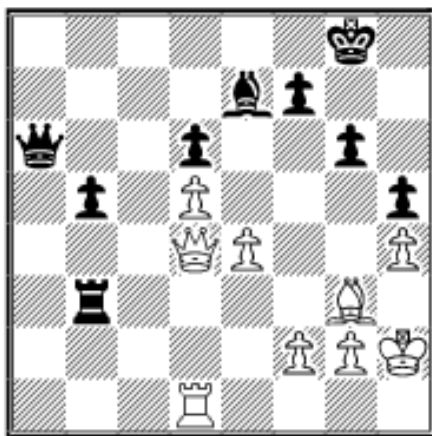
24...Be7?!

Black, with her last move, is trying to liberate the queen from guarding the d6-pawn, but at the expense of leaving the d4-pawn. Better would have been 24...Qb6.

25.b3 Rc3

After 25...Rb4, Black's rook would be badly misplaced and White would finally get hold of the c-file after 26.Rc1.

26.Qxd4 Rxb3



There is still material equality. However, Black's position is very difficult. White's pieces are more active, Black's king is in a more vulnerable position and White's pawn structure is also sounder. Tairova decides the game quickly with a few energetic moves in her favor.

27.e5

Another good choice was 27.Rc1 and then 27...Qb7 28.e5 dxe5 29.Qxe5 Bf8 30.Rc7 with a winning attack.

27...dxe5

A better defense was 27...Ra3, but even then Black has serious problems after 28.Re1, followed by either e5-e6 or e5xd6, depending on how Black continues.

28.Qxe5 Bf6

If 28...Qf6 29.Qb8+ (much better than trading queens) 29...Kh7 30.d6 Bd8 31.Re1.

29.Qe8+ Kg7 30.d6 Qa4 31.Rc1

Getting away from any discovery, such as Rxd3. Now the end is close, as White threatens Rc8 as well as promoting the d-pawn.

31...Bxh4 32.Rc8 Bxg3+ 33.fxg3 Kh6

Running from the Qh8 checkmate threat, but it is too late.

34.Qe5 1-0

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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