



COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



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Aronian on Fire

Most of the recent buzz on the international chess scene has been about the young Norwegian Magnus Carlsen, and deservedly so. However, there is another talented player, who does not command the same attention. He is super-grandmaster Levon Aronian of Armenia.

The first glimpse of his potential came when he won the 1994 World Under-12 Championship in Szeged with the score of 8/9. In 2002, Aronian became the World Junior Champion (20 and under), scoring 10/13. Two years later, he progressed to the third round of the FIDE K.O. World Championship before being eliminated by Pavel Smirnov.



Levon Aronian

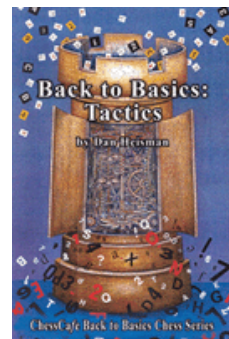
His break through year came in 2005, when he jumped to number five on the world rating list. He tied for first place at the Gibtele.com Masters in Gibraltar with Alexei Shirov, Emil Sutovsky, Zahar Efimenko, and Kiril Georgiev. He also won the 2005 Karabakh International "A" Group and scored +5 =3 -0 in the Russian Team Championship, with a performance close to 2850. In December 2005, he went undefeated in seven rounds to win the World Cup in Khanty Mansiysk, Russia.

In March 2006, he won clear first at Linares, half a point ahead of Teimour Radjabov and World Champion Veselin Topalov. He also tied for first in the Tal Memorial. At the Turin Olympiad, Aronian led his team to its first ever gold medal, and so became a national hero in his country.

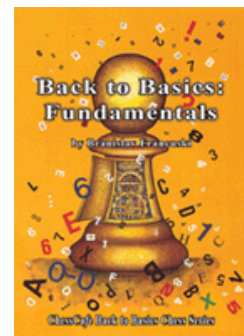
In January 2007, Aronian tied for first at the Category 19 Corus tournament along with Radjabov and Veselin Topalov. Four months later, he defeated World Champion Vladimir Kramnik 4-2 in a rapid chess match in Armenia. He then defeated Carlsen and Shirov to qualify for the Mexico World Championship, but there he only finished seventh because of illness.

Aronian began 2008 with a bang by tying for first at Corus with Magnus Carlsen, and most recently winning the Amber tournament with a 2868 performance. He tied for first in the blindfold section at 6½ with Kramnik, Morozevich, and Topalov. Yet he proved superior in the rapid section, finishing 2½ points ahead of the field.

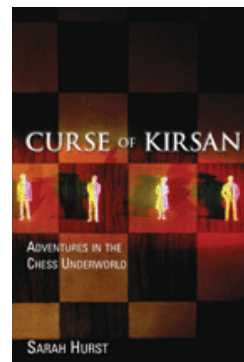
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Read an excerpt [here](#).

Aronian has a very unique and versatile style and a very easy going nature. He is a very nice individual, but do not confuse his personality with his play on the board. He is definitely one player who will be reckoned with for a long time.



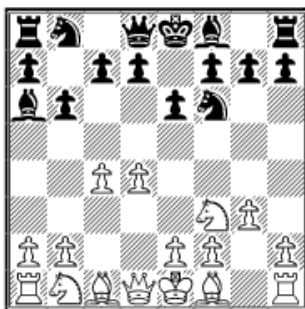
Hou Yifan

Turkey recently held a strong all women's tournament. The youngest participant Hou Yifan of China won the event by a full point ahead of veteran GM Pia Cramling. Here is one of her wins:

Zhu Chen (GM) - Hou Yifan (WGM)

Isbank Ataturk International Women Masters, Istanbul (4), 13.03.2008

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6



I remember that in the 1970s this move seemed weird and illogical. The standard rule was that you play ...Bb7 after ...b7-b6. The other odd aspect is that the bishop usually retreats to b7 anyway within the next five moves or so. This breaks the opening principle: "do not move the same piece twice without a good reason." However, the bishop sortie has proven itself as an exception to the accepted wisdom.

5.b3

White obviously had to protect the pawn on c4. Over the years, White has experimented with many ways of protecting the pawn, such as 5.Nbd2, 5.Qa4, 5.Qc2 and 5.Qb3. Yet, the game move has always been the main line.

5...Bb4+

The second black bishop also voluntarily loses a tempo, but this one is a bit easier to understand.

6.Bd2

White's bishop looks uncomfortable on d2, and would prefer to be on b2 instead.

6...Be7 7.Nc3

After the natural looking 7.Bc3, Black can play aggressively with 7...Ne4 8.Bb2 Bb4+ 9.Nbd2? Qf6, threatening with 10...Bxd2+ 11.Nxd2 and Qxf2+, forcing 9.Nfd2.

7...0-0

Other common responses are 7...Bb7 or 7...d5.

8.Rc1

While c1 is certainly a natural square for White's queenside rook, it is unusual to delay kingside development by Bg2 and castling. My impression is that Zhu Chen is trying to get her young opponent out of her opening preparation. The two most common moves are: 8.e4 or 8.Bg2.

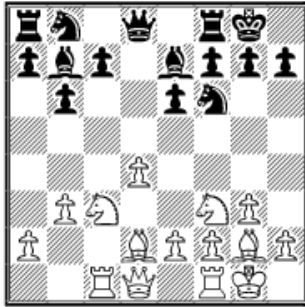
8...d5 9.cxd5 Nxd5

My first idea would be 9...exd5, although the game move is playable too.

10.Bg2 Bb7 11.0-0

White has completed her development. The only thing a bit unnatural is having the bishop on d2 instead of b2.

11...Nf6



Black loses a third tempo in only twelve moves! It is difficult to believe that this can be good, but Black can get away with it because of the positional character of the game.

12.Qc2

Clearing space for the f1-rook to move to d1, as well as preparing e2-e4 in some cases.

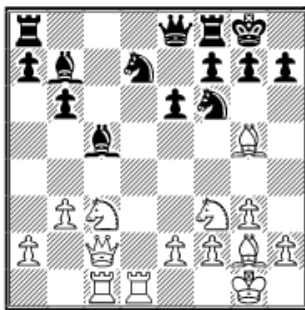
12...c5 13.dxc5 Bxc5

Another loss of tempo! I clearly prefer White's position here. However, fortunes change quickly in this game.

14.Rfd1 Nbd7 15.Bg5

White threatens to capture of f6, ruining Black's pawn structure on the kingside.

15...Qe8



A sad-looking move, burying the rook on f8, but it is necessary to get out of the pin. This is the critical moment of the game. White has many moves to consider, such as moving the queen off of the c-file, or moving the knight on f3 to offer the exchange of light-squared bishops, or even the pawn sacrifice by 16.b4, followed by 16...Bxb4 and 17. Qb2.

16.Nb5

Zhu Chen chooses the most ambitious approach, but it is not the best. I like 16.Ne1 Bxg2 17.Nxg2 with a small but steady plus for White.

16...Rc8

With her last move, Black not only prevented White's threat of Nb5-c7, but also created a counter threat by the discovery with ...Bc5xf2+.

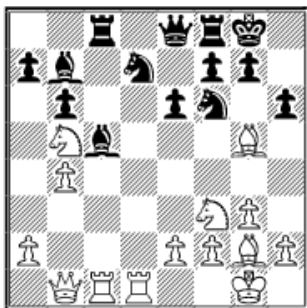
17.Qb1

17.Nxa7? would have been a blunder, allowing the discovery with 17... Bxf2+!. After 17.Qb2, Black's response would be 17...Ne4.

17...h6

Now if 17...Ne4, White is clearly better after 18.Nfd4.

18.b4?



This leads to some interesting tactics, but it does not bring White any benefit. After the simple retreat with 18.Bf4, Black gains initiative by 18...Be4 19. Qb2 e5 20.Bd2 a6 21.Nc3 Qe7. If 18. Bxf6 Nxf6 19.Nxa7, White's knight gets trapped after 19...Ra8. Or after 19.Nd6 Bxd6 20.Rxd6 Bd5, White's rook becomes captive. White's best bet was the solid 18.Bd2 Ne4 19.Be1.

18...Be4!

An important intermediate move. White would be a little better after 18... hxc5 19.bxc5 Rxc5 20.Nd6 Qa8 21.Nxb7 Qxb7 22.Rxc5 Nxc5 23.Nxc5.

19.Qb2 Bxf2+!

Another good move by the young Chinese super-talent.

20.Kxf2 hxc5 21.Nd6

21.Nxc5 would lose material immediately after 21...Ng4+ 22.Kg1 Bxc2 23.Kxc2 Ne3+.

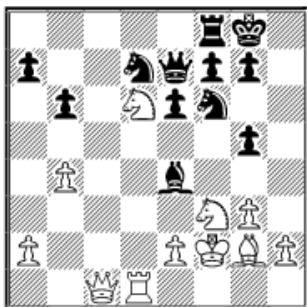
21...Rxc1

An important intermediate move, saving Black from losing material.

22.Qxc1

22.Nxe8 Rxd1 would give Black a big advantage.

22...Qe7



23.Qxg5?

The losing error. White would have been still in the game after 23.Nxc5 Bxc2 24. Kxc2 Nd5 and 25.Ngxf7 Rxf7 26.Nxf7 Qxf7 27.e4 N5f6 28.Qc7.

23...Bd5!

The winning move, disconnecting White's rook from the knight on d6.

24.e4

White could not move her knight, as that would allow the fork with Nf6-e4+.

24...Qxd6 25.Qh4

If 25.exd5 Ne4+.

25...Qc7!

Much better than 25...Nxe4+? 26.Qxe4!.

26.exd5 Qc2+ 27.Rd2 Ne4+

White may as well have resigned at this point.

28.Ke2 Nxd2 29.Nxd2 exd5 30.Bxd5 Nf6 31.Qd4 Re8+ 32.Kf2 Ng4+
33.Kf3 Qf5+ 0-1

The Susan Polgar Institute for Chess Excellence (SPICE) at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas will organize a number of chess tournaments and special chess camps in the coming months. Here are some of them:

April 26
Lubbock Open Chess Championship
(K-12) Scholastic & Adults

July 21-24
“Chess: It’s a Girl Thing” Special Camp

July 27 – August 1
5th Annual SP National Invitational for Girls

September 19-28
**2nd Annual “SPICE CUP” International
Invitational Grandmaster Tournament**

September 20
SPICE Cup Scholastic Open

September 27-28
SPICE Cup Open

In addition, the Susan Polgar Foundation is continuing to organize major events through out the United States. Here are some of our upcoming events:

June 6-8, 2008 Las Vegas
Third Annual Susan Polgar World Open Championship for Girls
and
Second Annual Susan Polgar World Chess Challenge for Boys
Over \$100,000 in scholarships and cool chess prizes are available
Sections: Under 8, 11, 15, 19
G/45 5 Round Swiss

July 21-24
Susan Polgar All-Star Girls Training
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas

Special Summer Chess Camp 2008
at the Polgar Chess Center in Forest Hills, NY
Week 1: August 18 - 22
Week 2: August 25 - 29

For more information, please visit www.SusanPolgar.blogspot.com or
www.TexasTechChess.blogspot.com.

Paul Truong assisted Susan Polgar in the preparation of this column.
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