



COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



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Champions Crowned at Texas Tech University

The fifth annual Susan Polgar National Invitational for Girls (SPNI) took place July 27 – August 1, 2008 at the Frazier Alumni Pavilion on the Texas Tech University (TTU) campus in Lubbock, Texas.

To be eligible each state can nominate one talented young female chess player 18-years-old or younger. Another way to earn a berth in the SPNI is by winning the Susan Polgar National Open for Girls or Susan Polgar World Open. Current members of the Susan Polgar All-Star Chess Team also receive automatic invitations. Thousands of girls compete annually in a variety of events to earn the esteemed invitations.



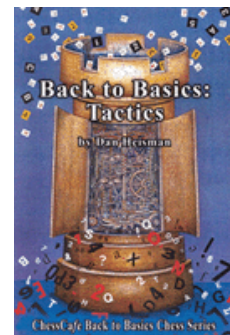
This is the first year that Texas Tech University hosted the event, and it has pledged to do so until 2017! Thanks to the generous sponsorship from the Provost's office, each player received free accommodation on TTU's campus at Gordon Hall, as well as three free meals a day at the "Fresh Plate" for the duration of the six-day event. In addition, TTU will award a four-year academic scholarship each year to the highest-finishing player who has not graduated from high school by August.

The official rules can be found [here](#).

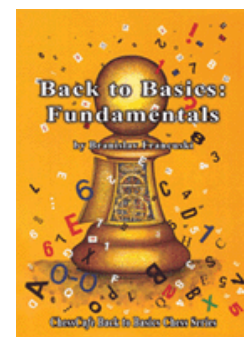


All the players and their families were treated to a special performance of the National Anthem by Lubbock's own Cactus Cuties (Baylee Barrett, Blaire Elbert, Andi Kitten, and Madeline Powell) at the beginning of the Opening Ceremony. These four young ladies are a YouTube

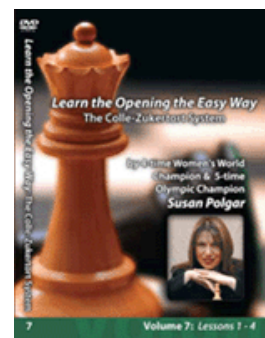
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phenomenon. One of their recent renditions of the National Anthem at Texas Tech was viewed by nearly six million people!

The tournament received incredible support by the University as well as the city. Many important guests such as Provost William Marcy, Associate Provost Jim Brink, Chief of Staff to the Chancellor Mr. Jodey Arrington, U.S. Ambassador Tibor Nagy, Lubbock Commissioner Ysidro Gutierrez, Student Government President Lee Bobbitt, Cheri Isett on behalf of her husband Texas Representative Karl Isett, Dean Sheryl Santos, Director of High Performance Computer department Dr. Phil Smith, Senior Staff Writer of the Communications and Marketing Office Cory Chandler, representatives from the Lubbock Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and many more attended the event.



Puzzle Solving Winners

2008 SPNI Puzzle Solving Championship

The first event completed was the SPNI Puzzle Solving Championship. Forty players took part in this event. Each participant was given thirty minutes to solve ten puzzles, ranging from checkmate in one to checkmate in five. The player who solves the most puzzles correctly wins. In case of a tie, the tie-break would be the time.

Fifteen players solved all ten puzzles correctly:

- Rebekah Liu (CA) 5:26
- Rheanna English (TX) 6:55
- Fiona Lam (MD) 6:56
- Rita Mirchandani (FL) 9:21
- Amelia Wheelless (NC) 12:41
- Sonya Vohra (IL) 13:17
- Shinan Jin (PA) 13:29
- Ashbea Oyadomari (HI) 13:41
- Alexa Lasley (CO) 13:44
- Nisha Deolalikar (CA) 13:47
- Mira Ensley-Field (WI) 16:50
- Hannah Helwig (AL) 18:05
- Morgan Mahowald (MN) 18:42
- Rebecca DeLand (NM) 24:45
- Susan Brown (VA) 25:18



Blitz Winners

2008 SPNI Blitz Championship

The second event completed was the SPNI Blitz Championship. Forty players took part in the five-round Swiss System event.

Top seed Courtney Jamison lost to Janice Chen in round four. This gave Janice a clear lead with 4 out of 4. However, she was lucky to escape with a draw in the last round against Michelle Chen. Michelle was a queen ahead, but lost on time. Since Janice did not have any mating material, the game resulted in a draw. Ashley Carter won her last round game to earn a share of first place.

Here are the top ten finishers:

- 1-2 Janice Chen (UT) 4½
- 1-2 Ashley Carter (MI) 4½
- 3-5 Courtney Jamison (TX) 4.0
- 3-5 Michelle Chen (MA) 4.0
- 3-5 Eve Zhurbinskiy (NJ) 4.0
- 6 Sylvia Yang (TX) 3½
- 7 Rita Mirchandani (FL) 3½
- 8 Sonya Vohra (IL) 3½
- 9 Taylor Bailey (OR) 3½
- 10 Nisha Deolalikar (CA) 3½



Bughouse Winners

2008 SPNI Bughouse Championship

The third event completed was the SPNI Bughouse Championship. Twenty-four teams participated. After five double rounds, the Texan team of Courtney Jamison / Sylvia Yang and Ashley Carter (MI) / Rita irchandani (FL) tied for first with the score of 8/10.

Congratulations to Courtney, Sylvia, Rita and Ashley! Three teams tied for third with 7 points. The youngest team was Alisha Chawla (7-years-

old) and Annie Wang (6-years-old). They scored 3½ points.

Here are the top ten finishing teams:

- 1-2 Jamison – Yang 8.0
- 1-2 Mirchandani – Carter 8.0
- 3-5 Ballom – Foley 7.0
- 3-5 Wheelless – Roy 7.0
- 3-5 Oliver – Diaz 7.0
- 6-9 Bailey – Lam 6.0
- 6-9 Mills – Chen 6.0
- 6-9 Barkell – Deolalikar 6.0
- 6-9 Whatley – Farell 6.0
- 10-14 Chen – Hwa 5.0
- 10-14 Zhurbinskiy – Pritchard 5.0
- 10-14 Field – Liu 5.0
- 10-14 Deland – Gossell 5.0
- 10-14 Lasley – Ashbea 5.0



SPNI Top Four

Susan Polgar National Invitational for Girls

A record fifty-two players from across the country participated in the main event. The winner of the 2008 SPNI is Courtney Jamison of Texas. After starting out on fire with five straight wins, she took a quick draw in the final round against the dangerous Linda Diaz of New York to clinch the title. The final standings can be found at my [blog](#).

Past champions are

- 2007: Julia Kerr (New York) and Eunice Rodriguez (Florida)
- 2006: Abby Marshall (Virginia)
- 2005: Anya Corke (California), Alisa Melekhina (Pennsylvania), Abby Marshall (Ohio)
- 2004: Roza Eynullayeva (Massachusetts)



Nisha Deolalikar

Nisha Deolalikar (CA) was the winner of the Texas Tech four-year

Academic Scholarship as the highest finishing player who has not graduated from high school by August. The scholarship must begin the following year at Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas.

Linda Diaz (NY) was the winner of the \$500 Ursula Foster award as the highest finishing player under the age of 14.

Crystal Qian (AR) won the 2008 SPNI Miss Congeniality award. She received the highest total of votes by her fellow players.

Faith Munoz (TX) was the winner of the SPNI Sportsmanship Award.

Morgan Mahowald (MN) won the biggest upset award, rated 994 she defeated a 1683 rated player in the first round. For her effort, she received a \$100 cash scholarship, sponsored by Mr. Dewain Barber and American Chess Equipment. Melanie Newell (MS) scored the biggest cumulative upset.

Randy Wheelless, a devoted Chess Dad (father of Amelia Wheelless), President of the NC Chess Association, *Chess Life* and *Chess Life Online* reporter, was the co-winner of the SPNI Parents & Friends Open. He tied for first with my elder son Tommy Polgar. Chess Dad Greg Gossell won the Parents & Friends Unrated Section.



Congratulations to all!

Special thanks to Jerry Perez, Dr. Hal Karlsson, Dr. Rich Rice, Chase Watters, Peggy Flores, Paul Truong, Mr. and Mrs. Grimaud, Randy Wheelless, and all other volunteers for transporting the players and their families from and to the airport. Also special thanks to Chief TD Frank K. Berry for running the tournament and Chess Dad Matt Mahowald for running the Parents & Friends and Bughouse events. This was truly a team effort to provide first class service to all the players and their families.

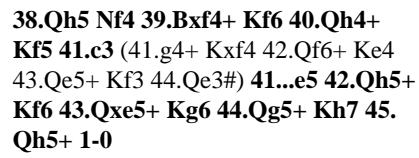
Over \$150,000 in scholarship and prizes were awarded in this event, and ***an additional \$25,000 was budgeted for housing, meals, and organizational cost.*** This level of support for chess from a University is unprecedented. Once again, special thanks to Texas Tech, the Susan Polgar Foundation, American Chess Equipment, ICC, Lubbock Convention and Visitor's Bureau, US Chess Trust, and others for sponsoring this fantastic event. I am looking forward to an even bigger and better 2009 SPNI.

Here are a couple of brilliant tactics from the 2008 SPNI:

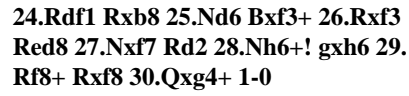
Chen, Michelle (1762) – Bailey, Taylor (1560)
SPNI Lubbock, TX 29.07.2008



30.Rxh7+! Kxh7 31.Qh4+ Kg6 32.Qg4+ Kh6 33.Bf4+ g5 34.Qh4+ Kg7 35.Qxg5+ Ng6 36.Qh6+ Kf6 37.Bg5+ Kf5



SPNI Lubbock, TX 01-08-08



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