



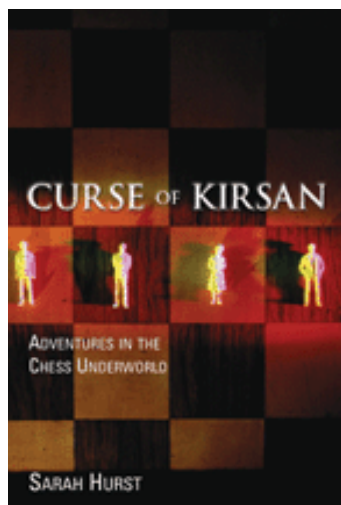
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COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



Curse of Kirsan
by Sarah Hurst

Q&A about Fischer, Kasparov, Karpov and more

I have received countless amount of questions since the arrest of Bobby Fischer and it is only appropriate that I share some of them with you.

Question How did you meet Bobby Fischer?

Answer In 1992, Bobby played his second match against Boris Spassky in Yugoslavia and was unable to return to the U.S. because of his defiance of economic sanctions. The organizer Mr. Janos Kubat arranged for my family to visit Bobby at a hotel in Yugoslavia, near the border of Hungary, in order to convince him to go to Hungary rather than being in a cramped hotel room in a small Yugoslavian village.

Bobby expressed his wish to meet me, but unfortunately I was in Peru at that time. I accompanied my family on the following visit and eventually the idea of moving to Hungary became more attractive to Bobby. Just to be sure everything was OK, we asked the border guards if Fischer could enter Hungary and they had no objection. With that assurance, Bobby moved to Hungary. At one point, he stayed in our summer home which is about one hour from Budapest. He was accompanied by GM Eugenio Torre from the Philippines and his bodyguard.

Question Did you play chess with Fischer while he was in Hungary?

Answer Yes, I played many Fischer-random blitz games with him and we also analyzed a lot. It was one of the most fascinating experiences in my professional chess career.

Question What is your opinion of Fischer?

Answer Well, I have mixed feelings. I respect his chess ability a great deal. He is one of the greatest world champions and is certainly in the same class as Kasparov and Capablanca, etc. Most importantly, his incredible impact is unrivaled. He transformed the game and created serious interest in the mainstream media. The Fischer Boom revolutionized chess in America and around the world. Look at how popular he remains, more than 32 years after his 1972 match with Boris Spassky. Thousands of articles have already been

published about his recent arrests.

He was very friendly to me on a personal level. I enjoyed playing and analyzing with him. He is truly a genius on the chess board. On the other hand, he has very strong views that we all know about. I disagree with these views and even tried to change his mind. However, that does not diminish my admiration and respect for his chess. These are two totally separate issues.

Question Who is a better player, Bobby Fischer or Garry Kasparov? And who would win if they played a match?

Answer If the match was played when both players were at their prime it would be incredible. But if I have to pick, I would say Garry has a small edge because he was the first world champion that fully utilized chess databases and computer programs. That is how Garry raised his game to a whole new level and maintained it for so long. Without it, it is a major handicap, but both players are just phenomenal; two of the greatest world champions ever.

I don't think there would be a contest if they played today. Garry is still the strongest player in the world. He has stayed at number one for an unprecedented 20 years or so. It is very hard to imagine that Bobby could win such a match.

Question What do you think about Fischer-random chess?

Answer I love it! It is a wonderful game and a wonderful contribution to chess. It certainly returns chess to the days when opening theory did not extend twenty-five moves deep. Fischer-random forces you to think for yourself from move one. Another great contribution from Bobby is the Fischer clock.

Question Should Fischer go to jail?

Answer I don't think so, being in exile for 12 years is more than enough of a punishment. In addition, no one else involved in the 1992 match is being prosecuted. Why does Bobby deserve different treatment? I don't agree with many of his views and he was totally out of line for saying things about 9/11. But he does not deserve to go to jail. Let him live out the rest of his life in peace. That is the least we can do for someone who revolutionized chess worldwide.

Question If Bobby played against Karpov in 1975, do you think he would have won?

Answer I spoke to Boris Spassky about this same issue and he believes that Bobby would have won in 1975, but that Anatoly would have won the rematch. However, Garry Kasparov has a different viewpoint. He believes that Anatoly would have won in 1975 and supports this opinion by demonstrating the quality of their games at that time.

This is what that makes chess so interesting. From all of the people I spoke to,

the opinions split right down the middle with a small edge for Bobby. I think it would have been very close. However, Bobby would have had a small edge due to his greater experience at that time.

Question Is it true that there were discussions about a match between you and Bobby?

Answer Yes, but obviously it did not happen. There were also discussions about a match between Bobby and Judit. That, of course, did not happen either. I would have loved to play a Fischer-random match against Bobby. I would also love to play matches against the great world champions such as Bobby, Garry and Anatoly. I think it would be great for chess.

Question What was training with Garry Kasparov like?

Answer It was a thrill for me. His chess knowledge is simply phenomenal. He can calculate so quickly and accurately. I learned a lot from Garry.

Question What is Garry like as a person?

Answer Garry is a very pleasant and warm person. He jokes around and behaves just like anyone else. He is very well informed about many subjects and is also very confident about his views. Garry is also at the top the list in promoting and revolutionizing chess.

Question Is it true that you are playing a match against Anatoly Karpov?

Answer Yes, I am playing a historic chess match against 7-time World Champion Anatoly Karpov on September 18-19 in Lindsborg, Kansas. This match is organized by Mr. Mikhail Korenman of the Karpov School of Chess in Lindsborg, and Paul Truong, with the support of the state of Kansas and the city of Lindsborg, and is sanctioned by the USCF.

The main reason for the match is to promote chess in the United States. This is the first time that the world champions from each gender are playing each other in an officially sanctioned match. In addition, the match will also help raise money for the Susan Polgar Foundation. I know that the Karpov School of Chess also raises money for its own projects.

Question How do you think you will do in your match against Karpov?

Answer That is an interesting question. The last time I played chess on the world stage was in 1996 when I played a world championship match against Xie Jun. After a long break to raise a family, I recently started to play again in the 2003 US Open Blitz Championship, the special Stillwater (Oklahoma) Women's Olympiad event, and a few smaller local events. Even though the level of competition was different from what I was used to, I feel that I am in pretty decent shape.

Even though this is an exhibition, it is very important for promoting chess, especially in the United States. Karpov will be a very tough opponent. He is one of the great world champions, he dominated the chess world for more than a decade, and has one of the best tournament records in chess. He is a fierce competitor. His rivalry with Garry Kasparov is considered one of the biggest in the game. He beat Kasparov in their last exhibition match and is still rated about 2700 – three decades after winning his first world championship. I have a very difficult task, but I am up for it.

Question Given the current chaotic state of FIDE, would you consider running for the presidency in the future?

Answer Yes, I would consider it. However, I hope that things will be fixed sooner rather than later. At this moment, my focus is to be an ambassador to chess and help to properly promote it. Chess needs luminaries to lend a hand in popularizing it. Chess belongs to all of us, chess lovers and chess professionals, and not just chess politicians.

Question What is your opinion of the current state of the USCF?

Answer The federation has done well in some areas and not so well in others. In order to run a successful organization debts have to be reduced, revenues have to be increased and better/more efficient marketing has to be done. The federation has done well with reducing debts, average with raising revenues and very poorly with marketing. Last but not least, *Chess Life* is an important communication tool with current members and for attracting new members. Therefore, an editor who understands chess, chess players, and the chess industry is sorely needed.

Question What is the Susan Polgar Foundation?

Answer The Susan Polgar Foundation is a nonprofit 501(C)(3) organization. Its mission is to promote chess, with all its social, educational and competitive benefits throughout the United States, for young people of all ages, especially girls.

- Chess develops decision making, critical thinking, logical thinking, evaluating, planning, problem solving, and perseverance skills.
- Chess improves concentration, memory, intuition and self-control
- Chess promotes independence, imagination and creativity
- Chess inspires self-motivation, self-esteem and self-confidence

That is why we should do much more to introduce chess to children. There are three major areas we need to concentrate on:

- Getting more young players involved in chess
- Motivating more young players to stay in chess, even for just personal enjoyment
- Help the most talented and most motivated young players to reach the top

level

The foundation has created the Women's Olympiad Program, sponsored the Annual Susan Polgar National Invitational for Girls, started regional training programs for gifted young players and will eventually expand this training program nationwide. I hope that we will be able to do a lot more for US Chess in the coming years and beyond.

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, 97-09 64th Road, Rego Park, NY 11374 (Tel: 718-897-4600) or email: PolgarChessInc@aol.com

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