

# **Player Biography Packet**

***Her Turn: Revolutionary Women of Chess***

**World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF)**

**February 4, 2016 - September 4, 2016**

**World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF) Exhibition**

*Players are arranged alphabetically by surname.*

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Eva Aronson

Mary Bain

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[FOR ADELE BELCHER, SEE ADELE RIVERO]

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Sonja Graf-Stevenson

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Elina Groberman

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Lucille Kellner

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Alexandra Kosteniuk

Irina Krush

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Caroline Marshall

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Vera Menchik

Mariya Muzychuk

Julie Anne O'Neill

Judit Polgar

Sofia Polgar

Susan Polgar

Adele Rivero

Nancy Roos

Alexey Root

Mary Rudge

[FOR ALEXEY RUDOLPH, SEE ALEXEY ROOT]

Diane Savereide

Joan K. Schmidt

Baraka Shabazz

Jennifer Shahade

Anna Sharevich

Antoaneta Stefanova

Susan Sterngold

Battsetseg Tsagaan

Xie Jun

Xu Yuhua

Anna Zatonskih

Iryna Zenyuk

Zhu Chen

... A ...

ANNA AKHSHARUMOVA  
B. 1957. / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN GRANDMASTER  
1987 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

Anna Markovna Akhsharumova was born in Moscow, U.S.S.R., in 1957. By 1976, she had won the U.S.S.R. Women's Championship. Her prodigious skill earned her the respect of many in the chess world, including notable figures who had previously ignored female players. 2003 World Chess Hall of Fame inductee Mikhail Botvinnik (1911-1995), for instance, had overlooked the talent of women even as formidable as 2013 World Chess Hall of Fame inductee Nona Gaprindashvili (b. 1941). Yet, he later began to recruit talented girls to his chess school, and Akhsharumova became one of his favorite students, according to Akhsharumova's husband, 2011 U.S. Chess Hall of Fame inductee Boris Gulko (b. 1947).

Akhsharumova attracted political and media attention as she and Gulko became known as Soviet "Refuseniks." By the time of the 42nd Soviet Women's Championship, which began in December 1982, the 25-year-old and her husband had been campaigning to emigrate to Israel for four years. When she placed third in the Soviet Women's Chess Championship, Akhsharumova claimed her plea for a visa caused her to be deliberately deprived of the title by Moscow chess officials. After deliberation by the All-Union Board of Referees in Moscow, who resulted in a ruling that cost her a critical victory in the tournament, Akhsharumova refused to replay the game against Woman Grandmaster Nana Ioseliani. This decision transformed Akhsharumova's win into a loss, and resulted in Ioseliani being named Soviet Women's Chess Champion.

John Grahams' *Women in Chess: Players of the Modern Age* (1987) further describes how efforts were made to prevent Akhsharumova and Gulko from leaving the U.S.S.R., taking the nation's shot at chess greatness with them. Upon learning that Akhsharumova and Gulko planned to emigrate to the United States, Botvinnik allegedly told the Central Committee, "Under no circumstance can Anna Akhsharumova leave. She can become the women's world champion." General opinion of the couple's "defection" was demonstrated by an art show, which took place in an exhibition hall of Kuznetsky Bridge, timed to coincide with the recent Spartakiad of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. This show included a painting of Akhsharumova playing chess with monsters, entitled *Single Combat*. Nevertheless, Akhsharumova and Gulko successfully immigrated to the United States in 1986. The following year, she won the U.S. Women's Chess Championship held in Estes Park, Colorado, with a perfect score.

Akhsharumova also played for the United States in the Women's Chess Olympiads of 1988, 1990, and 1996. She tied for 5th-6th place in the Genting Women's Interzonal Tournament of 1990.

EVA ARONSON  
1908-1999 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1953, 1961, 1969, 1972, 1973

Eva Aronson had been playing chess for 30 years when she tied with Marilyn Koput for first place in the 1972 U.S. Women's Chess Championship. At the time, Aronson was the chairwoman of the United States Chess Federation's Women's Chess Committee, an organization that oversaw the execution of national women's chess events. Aronson had been the natural favorite of her hometown newspaper, the *St. Petersburg Times*, which reported on the tournament daily. On June 7, 1972, the periodical quoted tournament Director Bob Braine as describing Aronson's playing style thusly: "Mrs. Aronson plays a simple, tenacious game. Deliberate, unruffled and solid, she makes the best of her position and is hard to beat. I never saw her play better chess than in this tournament." Braine also claimed Aronson's exhilarating match evidenced the dawn of "a new era in women's chess."

In an August 10, 1972, *Chicago Tribune* article, Aronson stated she shared Koput's opinion that chess was rightly an intellectual sport "too strenuous for some women. There's too much pressure." However, Aronson went further than her competitor in her assertions, speculating that contributing factors to the inferiority of female chess players included "childbearing and childbearing responsibilities", as well as men's aversion to potentially being defeated by women.

Aronson played a total of 108 games in the U.S. Women's Chess Championships, the fourth most of any player as of 2010, winning a total of 59 points. As reported in *Gambit* magazine in 1975, Aronson has also served as a chess organizer, orchestrating a number of tournaments in her home town of St. Petersburg, Florida.

... B ...

MARY BAIN

1904-1972 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER

1951 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

In 1933, twenty-three-year-old Mary Bain earned the attention of Géza Maróczy, one of the leading players of his time, after defeating future 2001 World Chess Hall of Fame inductee José Raúl Capablanca in a game during a simultaneous exhibition match. Maróczy trained her in hopes that she could contest the Women's World Chess Championship against his star pupil Vera Menchik.

Bain sailed to Stockholm in 1937 to compete in the International Women's Tournament at Stockholm, Sweden, thus becoming the first American woman to represent the United States in an organized chess competition. Though Menchik won the tournament, Bain placed in a respectable fifth out of twenty-six competitors. After Bain had immigrated to the United States from Hungary, The United States Chess Federation (USCF, now US Chess) was able to continue to conduct national chess championships through the course of World War II. Bain served as the Southeast's Area Director of Chess for the Wounded, an organization founded in 1945 by the USCF and the periodical *Chess Review*.

Bain later interrupted the domination of the U.S. women's title by Mona May Karff and Gisela Kahn Gresser by winning the 1951 U.S. Women's Chess Championship. Under the leadership of tournament director Caroline Marshall, this tournament was held at the Marshall Chess Club in New York, with the special exception of one round which was held at the Log Cabin Chess Club in West Orange, New Jersey, on October 28, and another held at the London Terrace Chess Club in New York on October 31. Following Bain's win in that Championship, she embarked on a tour of the United States in which she conducted simultaneous exhibition matches in chess clubs around the nation and generated positive publicity for the game in press interviews. Her 1951 victory also earned her a chance to compete in the 1952 Candidates' Tournament. Bain had a poor showing in the tournament, perhaps influenced by the United States Chess Federation's failure to provide seconds, or assistants who help players prepare for games, for its female competitors. Nevertheless, Bain was awarded the Woman International Master title in 1952. An article in the *Milwaukee Journal* from that year recorded Bain saying, "In this country only men chess players never believe a woman can attain their level. In her case this attitude has been more or less a challenge." To widen access to chess play for both men and women, Bain founded her own chess studio in New York during the 1950s. After her death in 1972, the U.S. Women's Open Chess Championship trophy was created in Bain's honor.

EDITH BAIRD  
1859-1924 / FEDERATION: GREAT BRITAIN  
UNDESIGNATED TITLE  
CHESS AUTHOR AND PROBLEM COMPOSER

Chess was a tradition in Edith (Mrs. William James) Baird's family—her mother and father, two brothers, and her daughters were all proficient problemists and chess players. Additionally, Baird competed in chess composition contests, occasionally against men.

Baird is remembered as one of the most highly respected British chess author and composer of chess problems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to numerous newspaper publications, collections of her compositions include the volumes *700 Chess Problems* (1902) and *The Twentieth Century Retractor, Chess Fantasies, and Letter Problems Being a Selection of Three Hundred Problems* (1907), the latter of which paired chess problems with quotes from the works of Shakespeare that corresponded with their set ups or solutions. Over time, she became increasingly interested in retractors, problems in which some moves are retracted so that forward moves can be played from the changed position. Baird's fascination at such problems was so great that she published another book on the subject, *The Twentieth Century Retractor* (1907).

According to Baird's obituary in the March 1924 *British Chess Magazine*, she had composed over 2,000 problems throughout the course of her life, and was to be considered "a valiant opponent over the board."

ANJELINA BELAKOVSKAIA  
B. 1969 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN GRANDMASTER  
U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1995, 1996, 1999

Anjelina Belakovskaia was born and raised in Odessa, Ukraine. She received her Bachelor's degree in economics and accounting from Odessa Agricultural University before coming to the U.S. in 1991 to compete in the World Open in Philadelphia. She was awarded the FIDE Woman Grandmaster title in 1993. Belakovskaia won the New York Women's Chess Championship three times, and competed on the U.S. team in the 1994, 1996, and 1998 Chess Olympiads.

Belakovskaia is a three-time U.S. Women's Chess Champion (1995, 1996, and 1999). In 1995, Belakovskaia shared the U.S. Women's Chess Championship title with Sharon Burtman, though the following year, she won the event by a full point margin, and grabbed the title again in 1999. Also in 1999, Belakovskaia became a naturalized U.S. citizen on November 24, and began graduate work at the Stern School of Business at New York University. She earned her master's degree in Mathematics in Finance from the Courant Institute in 2001. Belakovskaia's accomplishments as a trader with a Fortune 500 Company have been featured in *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other business publications. Additionally, she was named as one of the "30 Executives Who Are Excellent At Chess" by *Business Insider*. She has taught finance classes at the Eller College of Management at The University of Arizona. In 2000, she was honored by President of Brooklyn, City of New York, Howard Golden, for superlative skills and outstanding achievement. In May 2001, she became head of the Weather Derivatives desk at Williams EM&T (Energy, Marketing and Trading), where she was recognized as "Best Female Employee" for her efforts toward the company's success. She returned to the New York / New Jersey area in 2002 following the Enron collapse and rapid deterioration of the energy industry.

Belakovskaia started a chess program for children in Tucson, Arizona, in 2010. Starting in January 2011, she taught finance courses at the Eller College of Management at the University of Arizona. She became an Honors Professor in 2013, adding the course, "Chess, Leadership, and Business Strategy," at UA Honors College. Belakovskaia runs Belakovskaia Chess Academy at the Tucson Jewish Community Center. She is currently U.S. Chess EB Liaison to the Chess in Education, Clubs, Outreach and Women's Chess Committees, as well as Corporate Connections Task Force. She resides in the Catalina Foothills of Tucson, Arizona, where she runs her own luxury real estate business in alliance with Keller Williams Southern Arizona.

MABEL BURLINGAME

1910-2000 / FEDERATION: USA

UNDESIGNATED TITLE

1958 WOMEN'S MID-CONTINENT CHESS TOURNAMENT CHAMPION, 1972 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS  
OPEN CHAMPION

Mabel Burlingame was a prominent regional chess player from Phoenix, Arizona, in the late 1950s. Her career lasted through the late 1970s. In addition to earning a Postal Chess rating of 862 in 1956 (later 1022 in 1960), she won the 1958 Women's Division in the inaugural Mid-Continent Chess Tournament, held in Russell, Kansas. In 1958, she also competed in various local matches, such as a 1958 match in Fort Huachuca, Arizona, in which she won representing Encanto (Phoenix) Chess Club, and won the Women's Division of the Fourth Annual Arizona Open Chess Tournament, which was sponsored by the newly organized Phoenix Chess Club. She returned to the Mid-Continent Chess Tournament for another formidable performance in 1959, though the Women's Arizona State title was won by Mrs. H.P. Killough. Burlington won several Arizona State Women's Chess Championships and the 1962 Idaho State Women's Chess Championship. She competed in several U.S. Women's Chess Championships over the course of her career, though she was forced to withdraw from the 1964 U.S. Women's Chess Championship on account of illness.

SHARON BURTMAN  
B. 1968 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
1995 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

Sharon Burtman was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and learned to play chess as an extracurricular activity in junior high school. By the time she was a freshman in high school, Burtman earned an “expert” rating from the U.S. Chess Federation. Soon after, she won the Paul M. Albert Brilliancy Prize in the 1987 U.S. Women’s Chess Championship, and eventually earned a total of forty-five points in U.S. Women’s Chess Championships. Burtman became a New England Women’s Champion in 1988, and earned her title as Woman International Master in 1989. She represented the United States twice in the Interzonal tournaments, in 1990 and 1995. Burtman won the title of National Master in 1994, and then tied for the U.S. Women’s Chess Championship with Anjelina Belakovskaia the following year. After two grueling weeks of undefeated play in this tournament, Burtman told the *Los Angeles Times* that “Over the board, it’s a war.” Burtman participated in the victorious 1999 U.S. Amateur Team Championship (West) with the “Censure Countergambit” team. She also served as the captain of the Rhode Island College chess team when it won the Best College Prize at every U.S. Amateur Team Championship (East) from 1987 to 1991.

ELIZAVETA BYKOVA  
1913-1989 / FEDERATION: SOVIET UNION  
INTERNATIONAL MASTER, WOMAN GRANDMASTER  
WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 1953-56, 1958-62

Elizaveta Bykova was born in Bogolyubovo, Russia, and her family moved to Moscow, Russia, when she was twelve years old, and she began to play chess with her brother. At age 14, she began to play chess competitively. She placed first in the 1938 Moscow Women's Chess Championship and, as her skill continued to grow, she won the Soviet Women's Chess Championships in 1946, 1947, and 1950. She attained the titles of Woman International Master (1950), International Master (1953), and Woman Grandmaster (1976). She reigned as the third and fifth Women's World Chess Champion, from 1953 to 1956, then from 1958 to 1962. One of Bykova's most illustrious victories was over fellow Soviet player and 2015 World Chess Hall of Fame inductee Lyudmila Rudenko (1904-1986) in the 1953 Women's World Chess Championship match. Although she lost her title to another Soviet player, 2015 World Chess Hall of Fame inductee Olga Rubtsova (1909-1994), Bykova became the first woman to regain the title after a loss in 1958. She then successfully defended her title from a challenge by three-time Women's Soviet Chess Champion Kira Zvorykina (1919-2014), though she was defeated two years later by fellow 2013 World Chess Hall of Fame inductee Nona Gaprindashvili (b. 1941).

Bykova was not only one of the first FIDE (*Fédération Internationale des Échecs* or World Chess Federation) Woman International Masters in 1950, but she also later earned the title of FIDE's Woman Grandmaster in 1976. She promoted the game of chess through lectures and the organization of tournaments. Furthermore, Bykova was a respected chess author and columnist. She also authored three books about 2011 World Chess Hall of Fame inductee Vera Menchik (1906-1944), Soviet women chess players, and the Women's World Chess Championship.

... C ...

MAYA CHIBURDANIDZE

B. 1961 / FEDERATION: GEORGIA

GRANDMASTER

WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 1978-1991

In John Graham's book, *Women in Chess: Players of the Modern Age* (1987), Grandmaster Eduard Gufeld is quoted reminiscing about his friendly chess games with the young Maya Chiburdanidze: "Before me sat a girl of nine who was not in the least perturbed by an international grandmaster [...] it was clear she had great natural chess talents and an all-absorbing love for our ancient game." Born in Soviet Georgia in 1961, Chiburdanidze is frequently called one of the first women chess prodigies for becoming a Woman International Master at age thirteen in 1974. In 1977, she won the U.S.S.R. Women's Chess Championship. To earn the right to challenge Nona Gaprindashvili for the Women's World Chess Champion title in 1978, Chiburdanidze defeated players such as Alla Kushnir, Nana Alexandria, and later Elena Akhmilovskaya Donaldson. Finally pitted against Gaprindashvili in 1978, Chiburdanidze became the seventh (and then youngest) Women's World Chess Champion with a score of 8 ½ - 6 ½ at the age of seventeen. She successfully defended her title four times, defeating Nana Alexandria (1981), Irina Levitina (1984), Elena Akhmilovskaya Donaldson (1986), and Nona Ioseliani (1988) before her reign as Women's World Chess Champion concluded in 1991, after an upset loss to Chinese competitor Xie Jun.

A pioneer in women's chess, Chiburdanidze became only the second woman to earn the title of grandmaster in 1984. She played on dominant U.S.S.R. teams and Georgian teams throughout the 1980s and 2000s. Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990, Chiburdanidze represented the newly-independent nation of Georgia in the Women's Chess Olympiads. In 1992, 1994, 1996, and 2008, her team won gold, and she also took home two individual gold medals while representing Georgia. Combined with her earlier wins for the Soviet Union, Chiburdanidze has won an impressive nine team gold medals and four individual gold medals. Like numerous female players, Chiburdanidze did not always care for the term, "women's chess". She claims to prefer playing against men, which she proved quite successful in doing at tournaments in New Delhi (1984), Banja Luka (1985), Belgrade (1992), Vienna (1992) and Lippstadt (1995).

Chiburdanidze is part of a proud tradition of formidable women chess players who hail from Tbilisi, Georgia, including the former Women's World Chess Champion, Nona Gaprindashvili. Although Chiburdanidze's success story seems similar to Gaprindashvili's, however, chess champion and author Jennifer Shahade claims the two women maintained distinct playing styles. In her book *Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport* (2005), Shahade observes, "There is no prototype for the temperament of a champion [...] While Nona's energy emanates outward, Maya's is more introspective, giving her a meditative glow." Maya Chiburdanidze was inducted into the World Chess Hall of Fame in 2014.



PIA CRAMLING

B. 1963 / FEDERATION: SWEDEN

GRANDMASTER

NUMBER ONE-RATED WOMAN PLAYER IN THE WORLD JANUARY, 1984, JULY 1984, JANUARY  
1985

Hailing from Sweden, Pia Cramling reached the women's FIDE Top 10 list for the first time by age 19. She has been one of the strongest and most consistent international female chess players since the early 1980s. Cramling reports one of her most interesting chess experiences took place at the Lloyds Bank Swiss tournament in 1982, when she drew a game against her idol Grandmaster Viktor Korchnoi, who was one of the world's top players at the time.

In regards to her play in women's chess events, Cramling won an individual gold medal on Board One of the 1984 Women's Chess Olympiad in Thessaloniki, Greece. Like her contemporary, Judit Polgar, Cramling would later begin to represent her country in the open section of the Chess Olympiads (1990, 1992, 1996, and 2000). Cramling has become the number one female player in the FIDE World Rankings on three occasions: January 1984, July 1984, and January 1985. In 1990, for the first time, she achieved a rating over 2500 (2505). In 1992, she became the sixth woman to earn the FIDE grandmaster title, and only the third woman to do so through conventional tournament play. She held the third highest rating of all women in October 2007, when she was in her 40s. Competing in the European tournaments, Cramling won the women's European Individual Chess Championship in 2003 and 2010, and she won the Accentus Ladies Tournament in Biel in 2006. Akin to Judit Polgar (debatably the greatest contemporary female chess player, who has chosen to not play in women-only events), Cramling is the only woman to become a grandmaster before 2000 without also winning the Women's World Chess Championship. Nevertheless, she has come close in several competitions. In the 1986 and 1996 Candidates cycles, she placed fourth and third, and she reached the semifinals in both 2008 and 2015.

Having recently moved back to her native Sweden, Cramling was asked in an interview how the chess community ought to approach the chess education of girls. Cramling responded:

The first thing to do is probably to ask the girls themselves. They know what they want and what needs to change. Female role models in all areas: as a coach, in the chess federations and in the clubs. Focus on the social part, not only to compete or train chess together without doing other things. It can be crucial for many girls, if they continue with chess or not.

RACHEL CROTTO  
B. 1958 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1978, 1979

In the May 1982 issue of *Chess Life*, Rachel Crotto described playing numerous chess games just for fun—called “skittles games”—with her father before she began to invest more seriously in the game. At the age of 13 in 1972, Crotto became the youngest player to complete a U.S. Women's Chess Championship. As the youngest entrant in the 1975 U.S. Women's Chess Championship in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 17-year-old Crotto shared fourth place with Mona May Karff of New York and Greta Olsson of Los Angeles.

Crotto demonstrated a high degree of independence from a young age. She ran away from home at age 16. She later attempted to support herself with her financial winnings from chess, abandoning her studies at New York University to play in the seventh Women's Chess Olympiad (1976) in Haifa, Israel, on the American team comprised of herself, Diane Savereide, Ruth Herstein, and Ruth Haring. In 1979, she tied for 12th place in a field of 17 players in the Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Interzonal tournament. Additionally, Crotto dominated in the 1979 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, winning ten games and drawing one with Gisela Gresser, a former champion. The 1979 U.S. Women's Chess Championship was played July 8-22 on the University of California, Los Angeles, campus. This was two full points ahead of the second place 8 ½ scored by Ruth Haring. At age 25, she placed second in 1984 U.S. Women's Chess Championship with a score of 7 ½-2 ½.

In regards to Olympiad play, Crotto played a total of 47 games for the U.S., scoring 27 points. At the 1986 Olympiad in Dubai, Crotto allegedly became disenchanted with the game, citing the male-dominated nature of the chess world. Chess champion and author Jennifer Shahade interviewed Crotto for her book, *Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport* (2005), wherein Crotto discussed her occasional sense of alienation from “sometimes chauvinistic” open chess tournaments. Shahade wrote, “[Crotto] once called into a radio advice talk show to say, ‘I am a woman chess player, and every time I play they underestimate me, assuming I will play badly because I am a woman.’ Rachel recalls that the host advised her to ‘dress very sexy, wear a low neckline, and put on lots of makeup to use my femininity against them.’ Crotto's response was definitive: ‘Obviously, I was not about to do that..’”

... D ...

ELENA AKHMILOVSKAYA DONALDSON

1957-2012 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMAN GRANDMASTER

U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1990, 1993, 1994

Born Yelena Bronislavovna Akhmylovskaya, Elena Akhmilovskaya Donaldson travelled often with her family, spending much of her youth in the river city of Krasnoyarsk in east central Russia. There, her mother was a regional chess champion for a period of time. Donaldson attended a state university, which is now part of Siberian Federal University, to study physics and law before she left her studies in pursuit of her chess career.

Donaldson was a three-time U.S. Women's Chess Champion, and a 1986 Women's World Champion Candidate. She was born in Leningrad, U.S.S.R. (now St. Petersburg, Russia) before her family moved to Krasnoyarsk in 1969. There, she played chess in the local Pioneers Palace chess circle. Playing for the Soviet Union, she won the gold medal for best individual performance at the 1978 Women's Chess Olympiad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where she finished with a perfect score, winning ten out of ten matches. Donaldson was invited to attend the renowned Botvinnik School, training with the former World Champion and future champion Garry Kasparov. She had a breakthrough tournament in the 1975 Soviet Women's Championship, and tied for first in the Women's Interzonal in Roosendaal (southern Netherlands) in 1976. Donaldson contributed to another Soviet triumph in 1986; that year, ranked the second best woman chess players in the world, she played and lost a world championship match against her fellow Soviet, Maya Chiburdanidze. Between 1978 and 2002, she played in eight chess Olympiads, scoring 57 points from 83 games for a winning percentage of almost 70%.

At the age of twenty, Donaldson was awarded both Women's International Master and Women's Grandmaster titles. She lived in Sochi, Russia, then Tbilisi, Georgia, from 1979 to 1988. While playing at the 1988 Chess Olympiad in Salonika, Greece, she made international headlines for eloping with the captain of the American chess team, John Donaldson. After watching the United States Women's team hold the Soviets to a draw, the newlyweds immediately travelled to the United States. Fellow player Inna Izrailov commented on the famous union, "It's a real love match. A marriage, not a defection."

Donaldson continued to compete strongly, and was a Women's World Chess challenger during the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1995, she married International Master Georgi Orlov, who had helped coach her in the Soviet Union during the 1980s, and moved to Redmond, Washington, where the two ran the Orlov Chess Academy in nearby Seattle. Elena Akhmylovskaya Donaldson passed away in Seattle on November 18, 2012, after a nine-month battle with cancer, and was survived by her husband, her daughter Donna, and her son Nicholas.

... E ...

ESTHER EPSTEIN

B. 1954 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER

U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1991, 1997

Prior to her 1988 immigration to the United States, Esther Epstein accumulated numerous chess honors, including placing second in the 1976 Soviet Women's Chess Championship. One of Epstein later described some of the difficulties her family faced in the Soviet Union, including her brother's three-year imprisonment. She defended his innocence as a political pacifist, saying, "His crimes were reading [Aleksandr Isayevich] Solzhenitsyn and meeting the banished Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov." Epstein married Grandmaster Alexander Ivanov in 1977, and moved to Lithuania in 1980, where the two awaited an opportunity to move to the United States permanently; they finally received permission and emigrated in 1988.

In the 1991 U.S. Women's Chess Championship in Highland Beach, Florida, Epstein tied for top honors with a former colleague from the Soviet women's team, Grandmaster Irina Levitina. It was clear since the early rounds that the pivotal contenders for the top honor were Epstein and Levitina, as the two were never more than half a point separate in their scores throughout the tournament. Epstein won six games in the tournament, which was more than any other participant. Six years later, Epstein completed the 1997 U.S. Women's Chess Championship held in Chandler, Arizona undefeated. With  $7\frac{1}{2} - 1\frac{1}{2}$ , her score surpassed that of the previous year's champion, Anjelina Belakovskaia who placed second with 7-2. With her two overall victories in U.S. Women's Chess Championships, Epstein won a total of 117 games in the events, earning 62 points overall.

Epstein represented the United States at five Olympiads. The U.S. women's team at the 1992 Chess Olympiad in Manila, the Philippines, was comprised entirely of Russian emigres, including Epstein, Irina Levitina, Elena Akhmilovskaya Donaldson, and Yulia Levitan. This was one of Epstein's most memorable tournaments, for it was the first Chess Olympiad to be held after the breakup of the Soviet Union. In his 1992 article published in *The New York Times*, Grandmaster and chess author Robert Byrne used the Manila Chess Olympiad women's team as an example to demonstrate the Soviet legacy inherent in U.S. women's chess. Byrne also cited the 23rd Chess Olympiad in Buenos Aires (1978), in which former World Chess Champion Tigran Petrosian was asked how the Russian team performed, to which he jokingly asked, "Which Russian team?", observing the considerable presence of Soviet emigres on other nations' teams. Another memorable Olympiad for Epstein was held Elista, Russia (1998). It was hosted by Chess City, a location first proposed by Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, president of both the World Chess Federation (*Fédération Internationale des Échecs*, or FIDE) and The Republic of Kalmykia, a federal subject of Russia. Epstein played 52 games while representing the United States in Chess Olympiads, earning 27 points. In addition to women's tournaments, Epstein competed in open tournaments, as when she joined top tier players, including fellow players representing the United States, Grandmasters Julio Becerra Rivero, Ildar Ibragimov and Alexander Goldin, in the sixth annual Foxwoods Open in Connecticut in 2004.

Epstein currently works as a systems manager in the biomedical engineering department at Boston University.

... F ...

YUN FAN

B. 1989 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMAN FIDE MASTER

SEVEN-TIME MEMBER OF THE CHINESE NATIONAL YOUTH CHESS TEAM, 2009 U.S. WOMEN'S  
CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP PARTICIPANT

Born in China in 1989, Yun Fan is a Chinese National Master and seven-time member of the Chinese National Youth Chess Team. After immigrating to the United States in 2008 and becoming a resident of Greencastle, Indiana, Yun participated in the 2009 U.S. Women's Chess Championship. She earned her title of Woman FIDE Master (WFM) at the 2010 World Amateur Championship, in which she defeated Anu Bayer in a tiebreak. She was invited to compete in the 2009 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, in which she won games against Tatav Abrahamyan and Rusudan Goletiani, and drew with Irina Krush.

Although she has accumulated impressive accolades, the music industry beckons louder than the chess world for Yun. In the 2009 U.S. Women's Chess Championship publication, Yun readily acknowledges that she spends little time devoted to practicing chess, because she would rather concentrate on writing lyrics and music for a rock band in which she also sings. "I play chess for fun. My real ambition is music." She further explains the harmonizing effect chess and music have brought to her life: "I think music and chess are like two extremes. One is very rational, and one is very irrational for me, and I like the balance there. Chess can keep me calm and music can throw me up [*sic*] so I think that's a good balance for me, so I enjoy both things."

In addition to these endeavors, Yun made use of her economics and communications degree from Depaw University by helping to run a company that sends American music bands to China, and brings Chinese bands to the United States. Yun has worked as a Chess NYC coach as a form of outreach, and in 2014, she supervised young Chinese chess players during an online match with a school in Fuxin, China through Chess NYC, a program in New York City that teaches chess to thousands of ChessKids.

SABINA FOISOR

B. 1989 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMAN GRANDMASTER

2004 ROMANIAN WOMEN'S EUROPEAN JUNIOR CHESS TEAM INDIVIDUAL GOLD MEDAL, 2007  
ROMANIAN WOMEN'S EUROPEAN JUNIOR CHESS TEAM CHAMPION,

Expectations have always been high for Sabina Foisor in the chess community. With International Master Ovidiu-Doru and Woman Grandmaster Cristina Adela Foisor for parents, Sabina was competing in chess tournaments by age four. Foisor recalls devoting five-to-seven hours to chess study as a child, and looking up to such prestigious players as Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov. By the age of 18, she had earned the woman grandmaster title. She had also been crowned a Romanian and European Junior Women's Chess Champion, winning silver in the 2004 Under-16 category, bronze in the 2003 Under-14 category, and another bronze in the 2007 Under-18 category. While representing Romania on the European Junior Chess Team, she won an individual gold medal in 2004, and a team gold medal in 2007. Foisor jointly won both the 2007 Villard-de-Lans Open Chess Tournament in France, and the 2008 Liege Masters Chess Tournament in Belgium. She placed fifth in the 2007 European Women's Chess Championship, and qualified for the 2008 World Women's Chess Championship.

While representing Romania, Foisor competed in the 2008 Women's World Chess Championship. Foisor later competed in each of the past eight U.S. Women's Chess Championships (2009-2016). She has also represented the United States in three Chess Olympiads.

Foisor's goal in her chess career is to become one of the top 20 women players in the world. Nevertheless, she says, "Of course I can manage to balance chess with other things." This has been a necessary skill, for Foisor challenged herself by moving to the United States to study Psychology, Modern Languages and Linguistics at the University of Maryland at Baltimore County, which offers a well-established and competitive chess program. On scholarship as a full-time student, she competed on Baltimore County's team at such events as the December 2010 Pan-American Intercollegiate Team Chess Championship, in which she went 6 and 0. As of February 12, 2016, Foisor had a USCF rating of 2332. The resident of Lubbock, Texas, is one of 12 players who will compete for the 2016 U.S. Women's Chess Championship title.

... G ...

NONA GAPRINDASHVILI

B. 1941 / FEDERATION: GEORGIA

GRANDMASTER

WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 1962-1978

Five-time Women's World Chess Champion, Nona Gaprindashvili's sharp attacks and keen insight into the game of chess kept her at the top of women's chess for almost two decades. Gaprindashvili was recruited for intensive chess training when she was twelve years old by Vakhtang Karseladze, a renowned chess trainer visiting her hometown of Zugdidi, Georgia. Karseladze persuaded Gaprindashvili's parents to move to the capital, Tbilisi, where she could train with experienced coaches. In 1961, Gaprindashvili won the fourth Women's Candidates Tournament in Vrnjacka Banja, Serbia (then Yugoslavia). She used her distinctively aggressive style to defeat Woman International Master Elizaveta Bykova of Russia 9-2 in the 1962 Women's World Chess Championship. She went on to successfully defend her title three times against Soviet (later Israeli) Woman Grandmaster Alla Kushnir. Politically and culturally at this time, Georgia was often a scapegoat and victim of racism in the Soviet Union. Therefore, when Gaprindashvili took the 1962 world title from Bykova by a score of 9-2, she was hailed as a Georgian heroine. In 1963, Gaprindashvili played Board One in the second Women's Chess Olympiad, achieving the best individual score of 11 ½ out of 12, and winning the best-played game prize against Gisela Gresser.

In 1975, Gaprindashvili was challenged by fellow Georgian Nana Alexandria for the Women's World Chess Championship title. Gaprindashvili proved victorious, with a final score of 8 ½ -3 ½. In 1978, she reached a historic level of achievement by becoming the first woman to attain the title of grandmaster from the World Chess Federation (*Federation Internationale des Echecs*, or FIDE). Despite not technically meeting the tournament requirements that would ordinarily merit this distinction, it was awarded in light of her unprecedented shared a first place finish in the 1977 Lone Pine International Tournament under the guidance of her coach, Mikhail Shishov. She was the first woman to win such a high-calibre "men's" chess tournament, demonstrating that women could compete with men on the highest levels of international chess.

Gaprindashvili frequently played beyond the realm of women's-only tournaments, winning the Hastings Challengers tournament in 1963/64. She also continued to dominate women's tournaments throughout her career, playing for the Soviet Union in the Chess Olympiads of 1963, 1966, 1969, 1972, 1974, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, and 1990, and for Georgia in 1992. Gaprindashvili was a five-time winner of the Women's Soviet Championship in 1964, 1973, 1981, 1983, and 1985.

In *Women in Chess: Players of the Modern Age* (1987), John Graham observed how Gaprindashvili's performances encouraged the chess community to question the enduring belief

that men play chess with greater skill than women: “In 1973, after Bobby Fischer had won the world title, Dimitrije Bjelica reported on the results of a poll he took to the question ‘Why do women play worse chess than men?’ Robert Byrne responded, ‘Are you sure that they do?’ (He was annotating the Fischer-Boris Spassky match games) [*sic*]. ‘Here are Spassky and Fischer plodding on for two hours in a complete dead draw. I can tell you, Nona Gaprindashvili, Alla Kushnir, Tatiana Zatulovskaya, Milunka Lazarević and some others play better than many, many men.’” Graham contends that Gaprindashvili was the catalyst in bringing women of Soviet Georgia into the game, identifying a burgeoning interest in the game akin to that witnessed following the successes of Bobby Fischer:

Her presence attracted coaches, and access to good coaching is vital to the developing player. Thus, a generation of young girls learned chess in Tbilisi. They included Nana Alexandria, challenger for the world championship title in 1975 and 1981, Nana Ioseliani, world title candidate finalist in 1981, Nino Gurieli, and Maya Chiburdanidze, world title holder from 1978, as well as a host of others. [...] There were two ingredients necessary for the Georgian Connection and the resulting surge in women’s chess in the U.S.S.R: the success of Nona Gaprindashvili in women’s and men’s international tournaments at a crucial time in the emergence of women across the globe, and her personal empathy and grace towards her colleagues and competitors.

RUSUDAN GOLETIANI  
B. 1980 / FEDERATION: USA  
INTERNATIONAL MASTER, WOMAN GRANDMASTER  
2005 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

Rusa (Rusa) Goletiani was born in Sukhumi, a region in what was then Soviet Georgia. As a Georgian-American, Goletiani draws inspiration from Georgia's history of strong female chess players. In an article entitled "Georgian Chess Heroes," written for the World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF)'s exhibition, *Her Turn: Revolutionary Women of Chess* (February 4 - September 4, 2016), Goletiani notes:

It is hard to explain the success of women from my home country other than to say that perhaps we were lucky to be born in a country where we take in chess from our first breath. We see our parents and relatives play with great enthusiasm and have a steady stream of female role models to inspire us.

Goletiani's early victories included three World Youth Competitions between 1995 and 1997. At age ten, she won the U.S.S.R. Girls' Under-12 Championship; she later won the World Under-16 and Under-18 Girls' Championships. In 1997, she became a Woman International Master. In 1999 she became a Woman Grandmaster and finished third at the World Championship Zonal tournament but lost in the first round of the Women's World Chess Championship knockout event in 2000. In 2003, Goletiani won the Pan American Continental Women's Chess Championship in Venezuela, which qualified her to compete in the 2004 FIDE Women's World Chess Championship, though she was eliminated after the first round. The following year, Goletiani was awarded the prestigious Samford Fellowship. This award grants American World Championship contenders the financial freedom to focus entirely on chess study and practice for two years. In 2005, Goletiani defeated Anna Zatonskih to become the U.S. Women's Chess Champion, though she was defeated by Zatonskih in a two game match final the next year. In the 2006 and 2008 Women's Olympiads, she represented the United States on Board Three. In 2008, the player scored 9 out of 11 on Board Three at the Dresden, Germany, Olympiad, earning her an individual silver medal and assisting the American team to win the bronze. In 2009, she was made an International Master: She won her International Master norms at the 2006 U.S. Championship (single norm) and at the Women's Chess Olympiad (2008) (double norm). Goletiani currently resides in Westchester, New York, and is the co-owner of the Westchester Chess Academy.

SONJA GRAF-STEVENSON  
1908-1965 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1957, 1964

Born in Germany on December 12, 1908, Sonja Graf-Stevenson was the fifth child of Josef Graf and Susanna Graf (*née* Zimmerman). Her father was a Russian orthodox priest before he fell in love with her mother, who came from a Belarusian family, and abdicated his religious office to become an artistic painter. As evident in registration files from the City Archives of Munich, Germany, Sonja Graf's occupation shifting throughout her life from "nanny" and "art entrepreneur" to "chess master." The young woman frequented the chess cafes of Munich, where a fellow player introduced her to Grandmaster Siegbert Tarrasch (1862-1934) in 1931. In addition to strategic coaching, Tarrasch repeatedly published tactical examples from Graf's games in the German periodical known as *Tarraschs Schachzeitung* ("Tarrasch's Chess Newspaper"), which he ran for the last 18 months of his life.

Gradually, Graf came to hold her own against male and female players alike. On February 13 and April 12, 1932, she defeated the Austrian Grandmaster Rudolf Spielmann during simultaneous displays in Munich. Subsequently, she was invited to the Paula Wolf-Kalmar Memorial tournament in Vienna, Austria, which resulted in a major victory that proved her growing renown was justified. In the summer of 1933, she toured northern Germany and Holland. In Hamburg, Germany, she defeated the city's top female player, "Mrs. Ehlers-Giesecke" with a score of 5 ½ to ½. In lieu of an official women's national championship (which were not held in Germany at this time), it was after this game that Graf became publically regarded as Germany's strongest female player.

On the international stage, Graf became the chief rival of Women's World Chess Champion Vera Menchik in the 1930s. On March 21, 1934, the two played a 4-game unofficial match, in which Graf sensationally won the first game. They competed in several more World Championship matches and tournaments with Graf nearly taking the title in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1939, where only a single game separated them. Had she won her individual game against Menchik, they would have tied for first place. In this event, Graf-Stevenson, an ardent anti-Nazi, competed under the flag of Liberty. Halfway through the tournament, Germany declared war on Poland (September 1, 1939), but play continued nevertheless.

Graf elected to remain in Argentina during World War II, but moved to the U.S. after marrying in the late 1940s. By August of 1950, the World Chess Federation (*Fédération Internationale des Échecs*, or FIDE) had created and bestowed the title of "Woman International Master" to all participants in the recent Women's World Chess Championship, as well as Graf-Stevenson. In 1954, she became the first official California Women's Championship with a score of 8-0 in the eight player round robin event in Los Angeles.

Graf-Stevenson had disappeared from the elite chess world for approximately seven years while raising her son, but emerged spectacularly to win the 1957 U.S. Women's Chess Championship,

which she then won again in 1964. Today, she is remembered not only for her chess play, but for the books she authored during her time in Argentina: *Yo Soy Susann* (*I am Susan*, about her childhood) and *Asi Juega una Mujer* (*This is How a Woman Plays*), about her chess career.

GISELA KAHN GRESSER

1906-2000 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER

U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1944, 1948, 1955, 1957, 1962, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1969

In addition to becoming the first American woman to earn a USCF master's rating, Gisela Kahn Gresser was among the first 17 women to hold the title of Woman International Master. She was also the first woman to be inducted into the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame in 1992. At a time when some questioned whether women could endure the intellectual rigors of serious chess, Gresser was an important pioneer, demonstrating that women could—and can—compete in top-level events.

With a father who was a wealthy president of a Detroit steel company and engineering inventor of reinforced concrete, Gresser had the means to pursue her diverse interests in chess, classical languages, music, and painting to the highest level. After receiving her degree at Radcliffe College, she studied at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens on a Charles Elliot Norton fellowship. In 1927, Gresser moved to New York City, and over a decade later found herself on the European cruise on which she first learned how to play chess using a book given to her by a fellow passenger. She rapidly rose to the top of the women's ranks, winning her first U.S. Women's Chess Championship only six years after learning the game.

Gresser either won or shared a win in the U.S. Women's Chess Championship nine times between the mid-1940s and the late 1960s: She placed first in 1944 (going undefeated), 1948 (tying with Mona May Karff), 1954, 1955 (tying with Nancy Roos), 1957 (tying with Sonja Graf-Stevenson), 1962, 1965, 1966 (tying with Lisa Lane), 1967, and 1969 (at age 63). Gresser's record number of nine U.S. Women's Chess Championship victories has not been surpassed. In 1948, Gresser tied for first place in the U.S. Women's Chess Championship with Mona May Karff, and the two were selected as the official U.S. representatives to the first Women's World Chess Championship held since World War II, hosted by the Soviet Union in Moscow.

Gresser continued her long chess career, representing the United States in five Women's Candidates tournaments and three Women's Olympiads, including the first Women's Chess Olympiad in 1957. That year, the event was held in Emmen, the Netherlands, and allowed each team to have only two players and no reserves, so both players (Gresser and Jacqueline Piatigorsky) played every round.

Like Piatigorsky, Gresser financially supported the organization of U.S. Women's Chess Championships. Gresser was also heavily involved in philanthropic efforts during World War II, aiding efforts of the homefront as a board member of the national organization Chess for the Wounded. Unlike many federations in occupied territories abroad, the United States Chess Federation (USCF, now US Chess) was able to continue to conduct national chess championships through the course of World War II. The USCF partnered with the periodical *Chess Review* to found the organization Chess for the Wounded in 1945, the board of which included future 1992 U.S. Chess Hall of Fame inductees Arnold Denker and Gisela Gresser. Using her talents and fame as the 1944 U.S. Women's Chess Champion, Gresser taught chess in hospitals through the Red Cross and in the hall of the National Maritime Union as a volunteer for the United Seamen's Service. She also organized simultaneous exhibitions for the benefit of the Red Cross and the American Society for Russian Relief, Inc., which provided humanitarian aid to Soviet citizens affected by the war.



ELINA GROBERMAN  
B. 1983 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
2000 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

Born in Kishinev, Moldova, Elina Groberman's father taught her to play chess at the age of six. Her family immigrated to Israel before moving again, this time to the United States in August of 1995. Groberman was the three-time New York State title holder from 1996 to 1998. In New York, She initiated training with Mikhail Trosman, and participated in the Girls' Under-14/16 World Championship in 1998. Groberman was the New York State women's chess champion three years in a row. She tied for first in the Girls' Under-18 Pan-American Championship in Brazil, and at 14 years old, she placed 17<sup>th</sup> in the World Chess Championship in Cannes, France. The next year, she won the Girls' Pan-American Chess Championship in Brazil. By the time she was seventeen, Groberman was the U.S. Women's Chess Co-Champion with Camilla Baginskaite. "I wasn't expecting it," she said of the win. "I was probably the most surprised person in the world."

The multitalented individual speaks Russian, Hebrew, and English, and participated in numerous collegiate societies. In 2002, Groberman joined the rowing crew at MIT. She described the contrast between the singularity of chess and the solidarity of teamwork thusly: "In chess, although I can prepare for a game with others, I am the sole person who is responsible for determining the moves in a game. In crew, it takes the entire team to succeed, but a single rower's mistakes could lead to disappointing results. In crew you must develop a strong connection with your teammates and be able to work in harmony and trust them to give their all when it counts." Groberman is a former Deutsche Bank Trader, who currently teaches at several chess schools in New York.

RACHEL GUINAN

1927 - 1988 / FEDERATION: USA

UNDESIGNATED TITLE

1967 U.S. WOMEN'S AMATEUR CHESS CHAMPION, 1965 SOUTH JERSEY OPEN CHESS CHAMPION

Hailing from Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania, Rachel Guinan competed in various U.S. Amateur chess tournaments and in several U.S. Women's Chess Championships throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In the New Jersey State Amateur in April 1963, Guinan won the class "B" prize. In the February 1965 South Jersey Open held in Atlantic City, a three-way tie developed in the women's section between Guinan, Ecclesia Cestone, and Mildred Morrell. Guinan was invited to play in the 11-player round robin U.S. Women's Chess Championship of 1965, scoring 4-5. Two years later, Guinan was the highest scorer among the women contestants of the 1967 U.S. Amateur Open Chess Tournament with a score of 4 ½-2 ½, thereby winning the title of Women's Amateur Champion of the United States. The event included nine women in a Swiss tournament playing style. Guinan finished one full point ahead of her closest competitors, ranking 38th in the field of 210 players.

In 1969, *Chess Life* listed Guinan as the 20<sup>th</sup>-best female player in the United States, with a rating of 1647. She placed fifth in the 1969 U.S. Women's Chess Championship with a score of 4 ½-4 ½, only one spot behind former U.S. Women's Chess Champion Mary Bain, who scored 5 ½-3 ½. Guinan, who was the lowest seeded entrant to the tournament, was described as playing "exciting chess in every game and was a threat to the leaders all the way," by *Chess Life*. In 1970, the Philadelphia Chess Association hosted the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual Pennsylvania State Championship, in which Guinan was named the best woman player after a tiebreak with Marge Dickson. She advanced to the women's 16th top spot in that year, having boosted her rating to 1723.

Guinan also participated in the 1972 U.S. Women's Chess Championship. Competing against a strong pool of contenders in the 1969 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, which included Gisela Gresser, Mona May Karff, Mary Bain, Eva Aronson, Dorothy Teasley, Mary Selensky, and Katherine Slater, Guinan tallied a score of 5 ½-3 ½. As Tournament Director Bob Braine wrote in a 1972 article for *Chess Life*, "Rachel Guinan and Donna Bragg both played good chess, much better than their scores indicate."

... H ...

RUTH HARING

B. 1955 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER

1974 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP RUNNER-UP, FIRST AMERICAN WOMAN TO WIN AN INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT

In 1969, Haring's family moved from Fairbanks, Alaska, to the small town of Fayetteville, Arkansas. The 14-year-old middle schooler was introduced to tournament through her friends, and her first rating (1326) was published that year. As part of the "Fischer Boom" of chess that swept the nation in the wake of Bobby Fischer's 2700+ rating, Haring was inspired by his success, and competed in as many tournaments as possible. From approximately 1969 to 1973, she traveled to Kansas City, Tulsa, Stillwater, Little Rock, Oklahoma City, Memphis, Saint Louis, Dallas, and other cities for weekend tournaments. She participated in the 1973 U.S. Open in Chicago, and the following year in New York, the first of many U.S. Open Championships.

Within four years of beginning tournament play, Haring was invited as the alternate to the 1974 U.S. Women's Chess Championship in St. Petersburg, Florida. To the surprise of many, she finished the tournament undefeated despite being seeded last with a 1757 rating, placing second with a score of 7 ½-2 ½, half a point behind seven-time U.S. Women's Chess Champion Mona May Karff. The Championship Director Martin Morrison wrote in the August 1974 issue of *Chess Life*, "She set the pace for most of the tournament, and also finished without suffering a loss." Haring's rating increase from this event earned her an invitation to the 1974 Women's Chess Olympiad in Medellin, Columbia. Additionally, she qualified for the 1975 U.S. Women's Championship, a Zonal tournament, in which she finished tied for 2nd-3rd place with Ruth Herstein. At the time, the United States only offered two qualifying spots for for the Interzonal, so Haring competed against Herstein for the qualifier spot in a playoff match in El Paso, Texas. Haring won with a score of 3-1. She also competed in the 1976 Women's Interzonal Tournament in Roosendaal, Holland. Haring is particularly proud of winning an international women's interzonal tournament in Thessaloniki, Greece, in October 1980. With a score of 8-1, she completed the tournament undefeated.

Overall, Haring participated in every U.S. Women's Chess Championship from 1974 to 1985. In the 1979 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, she placed second with a score of 8 ½-2 ½. Additionally, from 1974-1982, Haring played in five women's chess Olympiads. Haring participated in the 1976 Chess Olympiad in Haifa, Israel, the first year in which the Men's and Women's Chess Olympiads were held concurrently. The American women's team placed fourth, and Haring won an individual bronze medal for her performance on the reserve board with a score of 5-3. She was later the top scorer for the U.S. Women's team in the 1980 Chess Olympiad in La Valletta, Malta. Haring did not perceive herself as a "woman chess player," but simply as a "chess player." She also played against male opponents, scoring a victory over International Master (IM) Jack Peters in 1977 when he held a rating of 2476, and she had a rating of 2043.

Beginning in 1983, Haring refocused her energies on her professional career, and returned to school to take programming courses. She procured a job at TRW in Santa Clara, California, and began working as a technology professional in Silicon Valley. She eventually ceased playing in chess tournaments by 1985. With her programming background and previous work experience with eBay and IBM, Haring has served the chess community more recently as a leader in several capacities. Upon her return to the world of chess in 2008, she was elected to the United States Chess Federation (USCF, now US Chess) Executive Board. She served as the President of the US Chess Board of Directors for four years, and is currently serving as a board member until her term ends in August 2016.

HOU YIFAN

B. 1994 / FEDERATION: CHINA

GRANDMASTER

WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 2010-2011, 2013-2014, 2016

Hou Yifan's father, Hou Xuejian, was a magistrate who cultivated a love of chess in his daughter from the age of five, when he hired a chess coach for her. At the age of fourteen, Hou Yifan was to become the world's youngest grandmaster, and the youngest female grandmaster in history. In 1999, her formal chess studies commenced under a member of China's national team, International Master Tong Yuanming, and she became the youngest member of that team herself in 2003. She won the Girls' Under-10 division at FIDE's World Youth Chess Championship in Chalcidice, Greece. Yifan achieved her FIDE Master title in January 2004. In July 2006, she was the youngest female player to enter the Top 50 Women (number eight) and Top 20 Girls (number two) FIDE lists at 12 years of age. The following year, Yifan earned the Grandmaster title. In June of that same year, she became China's youngest National Chess Champion, and was admitted to the National Chess Centre in Beijing at age ten, with grandmasters such as Ye Jiangchuan and Yu Shaoteng as her trainers.

Hou Yifan has participated in the 2007 and 2008 seasons of the Chinese domestic league, officially known as the "Torch Real Estate Cup Chinese Chess League Division A". She played for the Shandong Qilu Evening News Chess Team, which became the 2007 champion when it defeated the 2006 champion Beijing team, 3½ - 1½. In the 2008 season, there were 18 rounds in six different cities over a six-month period, from March to August. Also in 2008, at the age of 14, she battled Alexandra Kosteniuk in the final round of the 2008 Women's World Chess Championship, in which she ultimately placed third. One of Hou Yifan's greatest achievements is becoming the youngest woman to earn the title of Women's World Chess Champion in 2011.

In 2013, Yifan reclaimed her title with a 5½ - 1½ victory over Ushenina in China. Hou's peak ranking was 2686 in May 2015; her current ranking as of April 2016 is 2633. Though she declined to participate in the FIDE knockout tournament for the Women's World Chess Championship title, Hou challenged defending champion Mariya Muzychuk in the 2016 Women's World Chess Championship, which took place from March 2 to March 14, 2016 in Lviv, Ukraine. Without losing a single game, Hou defeated Muzychuk convincingly in Game Nine, ending the match. She has now regained her title, and is in pursuit of her goal of a 2700 Elo rating.

... I ...

NANA IOSELIANI

B. 1962 / FEDERATION: GEORGIA

INTERNATIONAL MASTER, WOMAN GRANDMASTER

1981, 1982, 1986, 1987 SOVIET WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION; RUSSIAN WOMEN'S CHESS OLYMPIAD TEAM 1980, 1982; GEORGIAN WOMEN'S CHESS OLYMPIAD TEAM 1992, 1994, 1996

With such illustrious contemporaries as Nona Gaprindashvili, Nana Alexandria, and Maya Chiburdanidze, Nana Ioseliani is part of a proud Georgian tradition of women's chess champions. When she was 15 years old in December 1977, she shared a second place finish with Alexandria in the Soviet Women's Chess Championship at Lviv, Ukraine. In total, she won the Women's Soviet Chess Championship on four occasions. She also topped the competition at the 1978 European Girls' Chess Championship in Kikinda, Yugoslavia, and successively won the following year as well. As a 17-year-old university student from Tbilisi, the capital of Soviet Georgia, the multi-time European Girls' Chess Championship victor snared first in the 1979 Ladies Interzonal in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, ahead of Hungarian competitor Zsuzsa Veroci, 13 wins, 3 draws, and 0 losses out of 16 games.

Ioseliani participated in the 1981 Candidates Tournament, the year after she had earned the title of FIDE Woman Grandmaster. In the 1992 Jugometal International Women's Tournament in Belgrade, Serbia, Ioseliani shared third place with such impressive women champions as Gaprindashvili, Irina Levitina of the United States, and Pia Cramling of Sweden. She later rose victorious in the 1993 Candidates Tournament, the same year she earned the International Master title. This was one of the two times Ioseliani won the Candidate's Tournament to compete in the Women's World Chess Championship. She challenged defending champion Chiburdanidze in 1988 and was defeated, 8 ½ - 9 ½; and in 1993, she lost at age 31 to Chinese grandmaster Xie Jun, the defending Women's World Chess Champion.

Ioseliani proved a formidable competitor against male opponents as well. She was one of the best rising female chess players to compete against a selection of male grandmasters in the 1994 double-round Palladienne Tournament in Monaco, in which the women's team triumphed with a score of 37-35. The top women scorers were Xie Jun and Judit Polgar of Hungary, followed by three Georgians, Ioseliani, Chiburdanidze, and Ketevan Arakhamia. Additionally, Ioseliani represented Georgia on Board Two in the 1997 World Men's Team Championship, scoring 1 ½ out of 7.

Between 1980 and 2002, Ioseliani participated in eight Women's Chess Olympiads, raking in an impressive five team gold medals, twice with Russia (1980, 1982), and three times with Georgia (1992, 1994, 1996). On Board Three in the 1992 Women's Olympiad in Manila, the Philippines, Ioseliani helped the Georgian women score 30 ½ points out of a possible 42 to rise above another Soviet republic, the Ukraine, which placed second with a score of 29 out of the 62 teams that participated. As often as the prominent Georgian women players of the 1970s and 1980s were

compared, as chess reporter Robert Byrne wrote in the December 8, 1981 issue of *The New York Times*, they varied greatly in their playing styles: “there is no characteristic Georgian women's style of play: Miss [Nona] Gaprindashvili is an aggressive attacker, Miss [Nana] Ioseliani prefers quiet development, Miss [Maya] Chiburdanidze is at her best in positional play and Miss [Nana] Aleksandriya enjoys sharp tactical situations.”

As of 2003, Ioseliani has refocused her attentions away from chess, and on entrepreneurship in Prague, the Czech Republic.

INNA IZRAILOV (KOREN)  
B. 1964 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
1986 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

Inna Izrailov was born in the Soviet Union. After moving to the United States, she lived in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn while attending Yale University to study Computer Science. She participated in the Pan American Intercollegiate Team Chess Championship on the 1983 Champion team from Yale, along with two future U.S. Chess Champions, Joel Benjamin and Michael Wilder. In 1984, the twenty-year-old sophomore was one of the few women in the four-day New York Open Chess Tournament.

In 1985, Izrailov was the third-ranked female player in the United States. At the time, she gave an interview to a writer for *Sports Illustrated* in which she said, "I don't know any woman who wants to be a professional [chess player], because it's hard to survive in the real world. I want a career and a life." Izrailov went on to win the 1986 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, held at the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado. Woman International Master Izrailov, scored 7-2, one point ahead of her nearest competitor, Liz Neely. In 1987, Izrailov placed =5th out of 16 competitors in the Smederevska Palanka Women's Interzonal Tournament despite being the lowest-rated players in the field.

... J ...

IVONA JEZIERSKA  
B. 1958 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMEN'S FIDE MASTER  
CHESS CHAMPION, CHESS EDUCATOR

Ivona Jezierska was an active chess player for over 30 years before becoming a chess educator. She started playing chess at age eleven in her native Cieszyn, Poland, and became a professional competitor at age 14, and moving to Warsaw to represent a prestigious Polish chess club, "Polonia Warszawa." According to the October 1981 issue of *Chess Life*, Jezierska had felt stifled by the Polish Chess Federation's limitations on her as a female chess player. In 1980, she moved to the United States and represented her new country in the Women's Chess olympiad in 1984 and 1986.

Chess champion and author Jennifer Shahade interviewed Jezierska for her book, *Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport* (2005). Therein, Jezierska detailed her experiences moving to New York City, and her friendships with other major female chess players. She describes her awe at the wealth and sophistication of nine-time U.S. Women's Chess Champion Gisela Gresser, who was always able to defeat the young Polish immigrant in chess despite being in her seventies at the time. Jezierska also befriended two-time U.S. Women's Chess Champion Rachel Crotto, whom she had previously met during Crotto's sojourn to Poland. The two played blitz games, frequented chess clubs, and roomed with each other.

In order to earn a sustainable income, Jezierska left her semi-professional chess career to focus her energies working as a chess coach and coordinator. In the late 1990s, she developed a comprehensive chess learning program to improve academic skills and self-esteem for Southern Californian children, entitled "Chess for Success." The program is designed to stimulate the mind through the art and sport of playing chess. Students learn problem-solving techniques, the importance of strategy and tactics, and improve academic performance.

Jezierska is also currently active in the St. Paul the Apostle School in the Catholic Community of Los Angeles as an elementary school children's instructor of chess and critical thinking.

... K ...

MONA MAY KARFF

1912-1998 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL MASTER

U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1938, 1941, 1942, 1946, 1948, 1953, 1974

Born in Bessarabia, Romania, Mona May Karff was instructed in chess by her father Aviv Ratner. She began playing in chess tournaments after her family moved to Palestine. Soon after, she represented Palestine in the 1937 Women's World Chess Championship tournament, where she finished in seventh place. She then moved to Boston, Massachusetts, began representing the United States in major tournaments. She won the first National Chess Federation's Women's Chess Championship in 1938.

Karff played in three Women's World Chess Championships. She represented Palestine in Stockholm, 1937, and then represented the the United States in Buenos Aires, 1939, and in Moscow in 1949. Karff tied with Gisela Gresser for first place in the 1948 U.S. Women's Chess Championship. The two players were selected as the official U.S. representatives to the first Women's World Chess Championship since the war, held from December 19, 1949, to January 18, 1950, in Moscow. In 1950, Karff was one of four American women to earn FIDE's newly-created title of Woman International Master. She moved to New York City by the 1940s, and was a regular at the Marshall Chess Club. Through the early 1970s, U.S. Women's Chess Championships were dominated by Karff and Gisela Kahn Gresser (1906-2000), who was the first American woman to earn a master rating (2200). Karff won seven national women's titles (the final one in 1974, thirty-six years after her first victory). She was inducted into the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame in 2013.

LUCILLE KELLNER  
1904-1964 / FEDERATION: USA  
UNDESIGNATED TITLE  
1948, 1951, 1955, 1957, AND 1962 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITOR

Hailing from Detroit, Michigan, Lucille Kellner was an active correspondence player who competed in U.S. Women's Chess Opens (women's competitions held alongside the U.S. Open Chess Championship), U.S. Women's Chess Championships, and Golden Knights Postal Championships throughout the 1950s. Among her accomplishments was a fifth place finish in the 1948 U.S. Women's National Chess Championship in South Fallsburg, New York. Two years later in 1950, she tied for first with Mona May Karff, the U.S. Women's Chess Co-Champion and defending U.S. Women's Open Champion, in the Women's Open Championship in Detroit with scores of 2 ½-½ each. After defeating all of their opponents, drawing only against each other, the two women agreed to share the title rather than engage in a playoff match.

Kellner also participated in the 1951 U.S. Women's Chess Championship. This women's tournament is remembered for its innovative publicity initiatives—thanks to advertising executives such as Edith L. Weart, the event appeared in news releases, and Kellner and her fellow competitor Willa White Owens were able to speak about the women's tournament on both the *Family Circle* and *Break the Bank* radio shows. Kellner's leadership extended to chess administration as well, becoming one of eight vice presidents of the Michigan State Chess Association at Battle Creek in 1952.

Kellner joined Eva Aronson and Willa White Owens as the only women to compete in the 1953 United States Chess Federation (USCF, now US Chess) Open Championship in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in which men outnumbered women about sixty to one. She continued to give simultaneous exhibitions, and competed in U.S. Women's Chess Championships, U.S. Open Championships, and state championships. She also won several Women's Michigan state titles.

In her July 1956 "Women's Chess Life" column in *Chess Life*, Willa White Owens typified Kellner's playing style:

Miss Kellner is famous for her fast, occasionally brilliant play. She is happiest in a tactical game, with combinations spiraling and bursting all over the board like the final burst of fireworks at a Fourth of July celebration. Her diagnosis of "what's wrong with women's chess" is that we are all too timid—lack confidence and aggressiveness—and she may be right.

Kellner pursued her love of chess until the end of her life, competing in the 1961 U.S. Open in Chicago even after two serious medical operations, and was training for the U.S. Women's Chess Championship before she was hospitalized. Following her death in 1962, her brother Louis began to support women's chess both at the national level and in her home state of Michigan in her memory. In 1965, Jacqueline Piatigorsky and Eva Aronson, two top American women players,

proposed renaming the competition “The Lucille Kellner Memorial Tournament for the United States Championships” in her honor. Gisela Gresser won the 1965 Lucille Kellner Memorial Tournament trophy, which is topped by a chess queen.

MARILYN KOPUT (BRAUN)  
B. 1948 / FEDERATION: USA  
UNDESIGNATED TITLE  
1972 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

Marilyn Koput hailed from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and learned to play chess at the age of seven. By the age of eleven, she began to play chess with other children. She became interested in chess tournaments after participating in a playground chess tournament sponsored by a *The Milwaukee Journal* in 1957. "The first year I finished second; the second year I again was second, but the third year I won first." *The Milwaukee Journal* reported on November 11, 1968, that the twenty-year old—who had been playing tournament chess seriously for only three years—was rated among the top ten women players in the nation, and currently held the title of U.S Open Women's Chess Champion. The Open was held in Aspen, Colorado, in August 1968, and featured 175 competitors.

Koput continued to rise rapidly. Her career highlights included winning women's divisions in the Wisconsin Championship, the Illinois Open, the Greater Chicago Open, the North Central Open, the Western Open, and, in 1972, the U.S. Women's Chess Championship alongside Eva Aronson. In contrast to the present-day trend in competitive player ages (many of whom are in their teens, twenties, or thirties), *The Milwaukee Journal* noted that Koput's age was unusual for a chess champion at that time: "Because of her youth, Miss Koput is considered something of an exception among women players. Most of them are women in their 40s or 50s." Bob Braine, Tournament Director of the 1972 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, described Koput as a woman with "an ideal chess playing disposition. She is serious about her game and should go far in the chess world. She was the only player to go undefeated and from the beginning spectators were aware of her self-confidence."

Koput competed in tournaments against both men and women, and claimed she had lunch with Bobby Fischer in New York in 1969. Despite finding this men's champion sociable, she confessed she would never play against him for fear of humiliating herself. She maintained the opinion that women were inferior chess players to men. "The fact is, that women are definitely not as good at chess as men," she claimed in 1972.

ALEXANDRA KOSTENIUK  
B. 1984 / FEDERATION: RUSSIA  
GRANDMASTER  
WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 2008-2010

“Chess Queen” Alexandra Kosteniuk was born in the Russian city of Perm, raised in Moscow, and graduated from the Russian State Academy of Physical Education in 2003. Her father taught her to play chess when she was five years old, and she progressed quickly. In 1994 Kosteniuk won the Girls’ Under-10 section of FIDE’s European Youth Chess Championship, in Băile Herculane, Romania. In 1996 she won the Girls’ Under-12 section of the World Chess Federation (*Fédération Internationale des Échecs*, or FIDE) World Youth Chess Festival for Peace, held in Cala Galdana, Minorca. She earned the Woman International Master title in 1997 and the Woman Grandmaster title at the 33rd World Chess Olympiad at Kalmykia in 1998, at the age of 14.

In 2001, 17-year-old Kosteniuk placed second in the Women’s World Chess Championship, making it to the final round before being defeated by Zhu Chen. She won the European Women’s Chess Championship in 2004, the same year that she earned the Grandmaster title. At that time, she was only one of ten women to become a grandmaster. The following year, Kosteniuk won the Russian Women’s Chess Championship, in Samara. Kosteniuk became the first woman champion of chess960 (also known as Fischer Random chess) in 2006. Then, Kosteniuk won the 2008 Women’s World Chess Championship, which was held in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, Russia, by defeating 14-year-old Hou Yifan of China in the final round.

Two years later, Kosteniuk was eliminated in the third round of the 2010 FIDE Women’s World Chess Championship (held as a knockout tournament), in Antioch, Turkey. Nevertheless, she used her fame as a former Women’s World Chess Champion to promote the game of chess worldwide. Kosteniuk described her chess education in her autobiography, *How I Became Grandmaster at Age 14* (2001), and suggested plan for improvement in chess education in *Play Like Kosteniuk* (2007). She wrote another autobiography about other aspects of her chess career, entitled *Diary of a Chess Queen* (2010). In addition, she has produced various instructional chess DVDs, and in 2005 began publishing a podcast called *Chess Is Cool*.

IRINA KRUSH  
B. 1983 / FEDERATION: USA  
GRANDMASTER  
U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1998, 2007, 2010, 2012-2015

Born in Odessa, U.S.S.R., (now Ukraine), Irina Krush learned to play chess in 1989, the year her family emigrated to Brooklyn. Chess champion and author Jennifer Shahade describes Krush's dual identity in her book *Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport*: "Krush, literally learned the moves [of chess] between worlds, when her father taught her chess on the journey from Odessa to New York City. Irina is introspective about her split identity, as quotes her : 'I am half American, half Russian.'" Having earned the grandmaster title in 2003, Krush is perhaps the strongest American female player today.

At fourteen-and-a-half-years-old, Krush made American chess history by becoming the youngest U.S. Women's Chess Champion with a score of 8 ½/9. She would go on to win the title again another six times. In 1999, she was the team MVP in the famous Kasparov vs. the World match, in which Garry Kasparov competed with White against a team of young chess masters. Despite entering New York's Mayor's Cup of 2001 as the lowest ranked player, Krush won first place. This also earned Krush her first Grandmaster norm. Krush was a member of 2004 Silver Medal U.S. Chess Olympiad Team. In 2008, Krush led the way to a team bronze medal finish, playing on Board One. At the 2013 Women's World Team Championship, she earned a gold medal for her performance on Board Two for the U.S. team, a result Krush called the best of her career. Her third and final grandmaster norm was procured in 2013 at the Baku Open.

The 2015 U.S. Women's Chess Championship resulted in Krush's fourth consecutive championship title, her seventh overall. Though Krush trailed Woman Grandmaster Katerina Nemcova at the tournament's halfway mark, she then won four consecutive games, and clinched first place with a draw against Nemcova in the tournament's finale. Krush has long distinguished herself as one of the country's best female players, tying 2013 U.S. Chess Hall of Fame inductee Mona May Karff's seven wins in the U.S. Women's Chess Championship. Krush enters the field of the 2016 U.S. Women's Chess Championships with the aim of becoming one step closer to breaking Gisela Gresser's record of nine wins. Krush frequently contributes to publications such as *Chess Life Magazine*.

... L ...

LISA LANE

B. 1938 / FEDERATION: USA

INTERNATIONAL WOMAN MASTER

U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1959, 1966

The life of Lisa Lane, the future 1959 and 1966 U.S. Women's Chess Champion, began in difficulty. She had an absent father and a mother who had to work a variety of jobs to support her daughters, who boarded with different families while they attended schools. When she was 19 years old, Lane began to pick up the game of chess at the Artists' Hut, a bohemian coffee shop she visited while she was attending Temple University to earn her high-school diploma while at the same time taking college coursework. As a regular player at Artists' Hut, she was discovered by Arnold Chertkof who introduced her to Attilio Di Camillo, an Italian-American master, who began to serve as her coach. He famously told her she would become the U.S. Women's Chess Champion in two years if she applied herself.

Lane travelled with Di Camillo to New York, where they saw 14-year-old Bobby win the U.S. Chess Championship. Inspired, Lane won the Philadelphia Women's Chess Championship a few months later. In the spring of 1959, she was first among women entrants in the U.S. Amateur Championship at Asbury Park, New Jersey. Finally, she made Di Camillo's prediction come true by winning the 1959 U.S. Women's Chess Championship title during her first appearance in the national tournament. At the age of 22, she was then the youngest woman to win the U.S. Women's Chess Championship. She subsequently received a high amount of publicity, appearing in stories in *Newsweek*, *New York Times Magazine*, and several radio and television segments. Furthermore, she served as an Associate Editor of *Chess Life* in March and April 1961. According to Robert M. Lipsythe's June 1961 article in *The New York Times Magazine* entitled "Queen of Pawns, Etc.," both *Chess Life* Editor Frank Brady and Austrian-Dutch-American chess author Hans Kmoch sensed Lane's "potential ability to renovate the public image of chess," which was the reason Lane saw herself as "the most important American chess player." She stated, "People will be attracted to the game by a young, pretty girl. That's why chess should support me. I'm bringing it publicity and, ultimately money."

Lane abandoned her studies at Temple University to concentrate more fully on the game, and in February 1961, she moved from Philadelphia to Greenwich Village in New York City. In this year, she won her first Women's Western Open title with a score of 5-4. Lane and Gisela Gresser represented the United States at the 1961 World Women's Candidates Tournament in Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia (modern-day Yugoslavia). There, she competed against Gisela Gresser and 16 other players to determine the challenger to Elizaveta Bykova for the title of Women's World Chess Champion. An article in the November 1961 issue of *Chess Life* proclaimed Lane was "symbolic, along with Bobby Fischer, William Lombardy and Raymond Weinstein of the rising triumph of American youth." Unfortunately, Lane had an underwhelming performance in the event, and during the Hastings Reserve Tournament, which lasted from the end of 1961 to beginning of

1962, she withdrew after two losses, one draw, and one adjournment. She ascribed her performance to being “too in love” to concentrate.

In New York, Lane played at the Marshall Chess Club or Rossolimo’s Chess Studio, and by the time of her participation in the 1964 Women’s World Chess Championship, she had opened the Queen’s Pawn Chess Emporium (1964), a chess club in Greenwich Village. Unfortunately, Lane had another poor showing at the Championship, placing 12th out of 18 players in the Women’s Candidates Tournament. However, Lane experienced a major turnaround by sharing a win at the 1966 U.S. Women’s Chess Championship with Gisela Gresser. She considered her contemporary and then-U.S. Chess Champion, Bobby Fischer, the greatest player ever. Fischer considered all women players weak: "They're all fish. Lisa, you might say, is the best of the American fish."

Lane stopped competing in chess tournaments by the time she was 30, though she briefly emerged from her retirement in 1971 to publicly play a game against an IBM chess computer, which she won. Of the game she stated, “It did not [...] appear to resent losing to a woman as do many human male players.”

IRINA LEVITINA  
B. 1954 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN GRANDMASTER  
U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1991, 1992, 1993, 1998

Irina Solomonova Levitina was born in Leningrad, U.S.S.R. Similar to other Soviet émigré players, Levitina had a successful track record in her homeland before becoming a U.S. Women's Chess Champion. She had been the Soviet women's champion on four occasions and challenged for the Women's World Chess Championship before her immigration. In 1973, she tied for 2nd-5th place in the Interzonal in Menorca. Nevertheless, Levitina became the Soviet Women's Champion on four occasions: 1971, jointly in 1978, 1979, and 1981. She was awarded the title of Woman International Master in 1972, and Woman Grandmaster in 1976. In 1982, Levitina placed second in the Interzonal in Tbilisi, Georgia. The following year, she defeated Nona Gaprindashvili 6 - 4 in the quarterfinal, and Nana Alexandria 7 ½ - 6 ½ in Dubna, Russia (semifinal). In 1984, Levitina defeated Lidia Semenova 7-5 in Sochi, becoming a Women's World Chess Championship Challenger, though she would ultimately lose to Maya Chiburdanidze in a title match at Volgograd 1984, 5 ½ - 8 ½. Levitina became a Women's World Chess Champion Candidate in 1984. In 1984, Chiburdanidze defended her title against challenger Irina Levitina. Their match was closely fought, but Levitina blundered in the ninth game, allowing Chiburdanidze to win. Chiburdanidze then earned three and a half points in their final games, thereby securing the title again.

Following her immigration to the United States, Levitina won the U.S. Women's Championship in 1991, 1992, jointly in 1993, and 1998. The then 38-year-old grandmaster won the 1992 U.S. Women's Chess Championship held at Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts, with a score of 8-1. In this championship, she was also awarded the Paul M. Albert prize for her best game against contender Leslie Wood Pelech. In the 1993 Women's Candidates Tournament in Shanghai, Levitina represented the United States, tying for sixth-seventh place in the nine player double round robin event with a score of 6 ½-9 ½. She ultimately abandoned serious chess play in order to pursue a career as a professional bridge player.

... M ...

CAROLINE MARSHALL

CA. 1888-1971 / FEDERATION: USA

UNDESIGNATED TITLE

WOMEN'S CHESS ORGANIZER, MARSHALL CHESS CLUB MANAGER

Writing on the occasion of Caroline Marshall's death, chess player and advocate Edith L. Weart speculated that her friend, "Carrie," had been born in Brooklyn, New York, around 1888. On January 6, 1904, when she was 17 years old, Caroline married Frank Marshall, U.S. Chess Champion, World Chess Champion candidate, founder of New York's still-active Marshall Chess Club, and 1986 U.S. Chess Hall of Fame inductee. At the time Weart arrived at the Marshall Chess Club in 1932, it hosted only one visiting female member, Mrs. William Seamon. Under Caroline's direction, the Marshall Chess Club began allowing women to become formal members.

Caroline was also at the forefront of the founding of the U.S. Women's Chess Championship. She was initially inspired to organize a women's chess event in 1934. For the following two years successful open women's tournaments were held at the West Village brownstone. In 1937, the tournament received the support of the national Chess Federation, which announced that the first official U.S. women's title. The first U.S. Women's Chess Championship was held at the R.C.A. Building, Rockefeller Center in New York City, and organized and managed by Caroline Marshall. The event was held concurrently with the men's national championship. The schedule of this tournament was designed to be more flexible than the men's schedule, and the female contestants were not required to play more than three rounds per week. Adele Rivero Belcher, holder of the Hazel Allen championship trophy, was rightly predicted to come out on top of the competition. The first Women's Chess Championship held by the American Chess Federation was won by Rivero Belcher in 1937, and the first National Chess Federation's Women's Chess Championship was won by Mona May Karff in 1938. Caroline also sat on the Women's Division committee, appointed by chairwoman Willa White Owens, which served to promote greater interest in chess among women, and to plan specifically for women's chess events such as the U.S. Women's Open Tournaments and U.S. Women's Chess Championships.

After Frank Marshall passed away on November 9, 1944, Caroline and her son, Frank Marshall, Jr., continued to operate the Marshall Chess Club. Caroline considered the club a memorial to her husband. Even after her son died at the age of 50, Caroline continued to manage the club, demanding a sense of decorum even in regards to players' attire. Not even 1986 U.S. Chess Hall of Fame inductee and 2001 World Chess Hall of Fame inductee Bobby Fischer (1943-2008) was an exception. Frank Brady wrote in his *New York Times* bestselling book, *Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall—from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness* (2011), that "Bobby's habitual mufti of tee shirt, wrinkled pants, and sneakers was considered an outrage by Caroline Marshall [...] and on several occasions she informed him of his sartorial

indiscretion, once even threatening to bar him from the premises if he didn't dress more appropriately.”

Caroline Marshall was publically lauded as a chess organizer. As Milton Finkelstein wrote for the April 1948 issue of *Chess Life*, “Mrs. Caroline Marshall and Mrs. Maude Stephens, secretaries of the Marshall and Manhattan Chess Clubs, are the arteries of their respective organizations.” The following year, at the annual meeting of the United States Chess Federation (USCF, now US Chess) at Omaha, Nebraska, she was elected a Life Director. For nearly half a century, Caroline carried the torch of the club, operating it until 1969, just two years before her death in 1971.

COLLETTE MCGRUDER  
FEDERATION: USA  
CANDIDATE MASTER  
REGION XI WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION, CHESS EDUCATOR

Collette McGruder of Southern California was one of the strongest African-American chess players in the world for decades. She served as a role model and mentor to Baraka Shabazz, the first African-American female player to compete in the U.S. Women's Chess Championship. In an opinion article entitled, "Black Women in American Chess," Daaim Shabazz claims that although Baraka Shabazz's fame may surpass that of Collette McGruder, the elder player's achievements as a player were arguably more impressive and impactful. She was the first African-American woman to surmount the 2000 Elo point level, and earned a place on the U.S. Top Women's player list multiple times throughout the 1980s.

In 1999, McGruder became the first African American woman to win the Region XI Women's Chess Championship at Menlo Park, Palo Alto, California. This annual tournament recognizes the top women players from California, Arizona, Hawaii, and Nevada. She tied for second place with Grigoriy Butayev behind James Boren in the Chess Academy in Hollywood 2001 tournament. In December of the same year, McGruder placed second in a pool of 32 entries in the Open Chess Tournament held at the Exposition Park Library, Los Angeles, California. Additionally, she has played strongly in team settings. On the team called the Vera Menchik Brigade in honor of the multi-time Women's World Chess Champion, McGruder, Michael White, Constance McClendon, and Debra Rothman placed first in the U1400 division of the 2008 U.S. Amateur Team with a score of 2-4.

McGruder has transformed from a chess competitor to a chess coach and educator. She continuously sponsors scholastic tournaments, and is involved with the Paul Morphy Chess Club to promote chess players of all ages in South Central Los Angeles. She is a certified Californian Local Chess Coach (Level I).

VERA MENCHIK

1906-1944 / FEDERATION: RUSSIA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ENGLAND

UNDESIGNATED TITLE

WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 1927, 1930, 1931, 1933, 1935, 1937, 1939

Born in Moscow, Russia, to a Czechoslovakian father and a British mother, Vera Menchik represented England during her pioneering chess career. She learned to play chess at age nine. Menchik was 11 years old at the time of the 1917 Russian Revolution, which led her family to emigrate to Hastings, England, in 1921. Naturally shy and still in the process of becoming fluent in English, Menchik turned to chess as an outlet. "Chess is a quiet game," she observed, "a perfect activity for someone who does not speak the language." Her reserved demeanor, however, belied Menchik's formidable and aggressive tactics over the chessboard. She joined the well-established Hastings Chess Club in 1923, where her talent attracted the attention of her future coach, Hungarian Grandmaster Géza Maróczy (1870-1951). Under Maróczy's guidance, she became the best female player in England by 1925, when she defeated the second-best player, Edith Price, in two matches.

In 1927, when Menchik was 21 years old, the World Chess Federation (*Fédération Internationale des Échecs* or FIDE) established the first Women's World Chess Championship. London hosted the tournament in conjunction with the first men's world team competition. Sixteen women from seven nations were invited to participate in the round-robin event. Menchik won the first Women's World Chess Championship title by a landslide, with 10 wins and one draw out of 11 games, and successfully defended her title six times over the next 17 years. Out of the 69 games she played throughout these seven championship tournaments, Menchik won 64 games, drew four games, and lost only one game. She eventually thirsted for more challenging opponents, and higher accolades. Chess champion and author Jennifer Shahade's book, *Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport* (2005) quotes Menchik on page 22: "Victories over woman don't satisfy me anymore. I want to drink men's blood." She became the first woman to compete seriously against top male chess players. Austrian-Argentine chess master Albert Becker had proclaimed before the start of the 1929 Carlsbad International Tournament that if a man lost to Menchik, he would become a member of the "Vera Menchik Club." Becker became the first member of the club and was soon joined by Max Euwe, Samuel Reshevsky, Jacques Mieses, and other respected male players. At Ramsgate 1929, Menchik scored an excellent 5 out of 7 against the best British chess players, surpassing her teacher Maróczy (4.5) and tying with the great Akiba Rubinstein.

Menchik's career came to a tragic end at the age of 38 when she, her two sisters, and their mother perished in their South London home during a June 1944 V-1 rocket bombing raid. However, her chess legacy endures. The Women's Chess Olympiad trophy is called the Vera Menchik Cup in her honor. Additionally, Elizaveta Bykova, the third Women's World Chess Champion, published *Vera Menchik*, a biographical book that underscores Menchik's Russian heritage, aiming to promote women's chess in the Soviet Union. Menchik became the first woman to be inducted into the World Chess Hall of Fame in September 2011.



MARIYA MUZYCHUK  
B. 1992 / FEDERATION: UKRAINE  
GRANDMASTER  
2015 WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION

Mariya Muzychuk is a two-time winner of the Ukrainian Women's Chess Championship (2012, 2013), and was the Women's World Chess Champion from April 2015 to March 2016. Muzychuk is the younger sister of International Master Anna Muzychuk, who represents Ukraine. Mariya Muzychuk earned the Woman International Master title in 2005, the Woman Grandmaster title in 2007, and the International Master title in 2008. She earned bronze medals in the 2012 and 2014 Women's Chess Olympiads. Also in 2014, she earned a grandmaster norm by winning the top women's prize at the Gibraltar Masters tournament.

Muzychuk first competed in the Women's World Chess Championship in 2010. She made it to the top-16 of the 2010 Women's World Chess Championship before losing to Dronavalli Harika. Muzychuk achieved an upset victory in the 2015 Women's World Chess Championship. The tournament was held in the same location as the previous Winter Olympics—the Russian resort-city of Sochi. As a result of her victory, Muzychuk was also awarded the Order of Merit, 3rd Class by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. She also attained the Grandmaster title as a direct award, and qualified for the 2015 Chess World Cup to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan. Muzychuk lost her World Women's Chess Championship title in 2016 to Grandmaster Hou Yifan.

... O ...

JULIE ANNE O'NEILL  
B.1948 / FEDERATION: USA  
UNDESIGNATED TITLE  
CHESS EDITOR

A former employee of the United States Chess Federation (USCF, now US Chess), Julie Anne O'Neill became the first and, as of April 2016, only woman editor of the periodical *Chess Life* in September 1989. O'Neill had served as *Chess Life*'s Assistant Editor throughout the early and mid months of 1989, before she was appointed as Interim Editor in September and October, finally becoming the publication's official Editor in November.

In addition to her publishing prowess, O'Neill participated in various chess tournaments in the United States. In the 2006 United States Senior Championship held in Nashville, Tennessee, O'Neill earned a respectable score of 3/6. Recently, she has competed in the 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Southwest Open (August 2013), competing against players with an average Elo rating of 1840. She placed 50<sup>th</sup> out of 68 competitors. Her chess rating in regular play as of February 2016 was 1812.

... P ...

JUDIT POLGAR

B. 1976 / FEDERATION: HUNGARY

GRANDMASTER

HIGHEST RATED FEMALE CHESS PLAYER OF ALL TIME

Holding the world record for the youngest person to become a Grandmaster, Judit Polgar once confessed, “My attitude toward the game, especially in my youth could be called obsessive.” After a stellar performance at the 1987 New York Open, during which she defeated her first grandmaster, Judit was extolled as a promising prodigy. The British daily publication *The Guardian* wrote, “She is the best eleven-year-old of either sex in the entire history of chess.” Judit won her first international chess tournament when she was nine, and won the Boys’ World Chess Championship in her age group when she was twelve and fourteen.

In 1988, Judit and her older sisters Susan and Sofia won Chess Olympiad gold on the Hungarian women’s team in Thessaloniki, Greece—a historic first for Hungarian chess. On Board Two, Judit personally scored 12 ½ out of 13, winning an individual gold medal with a performance rating of 2694. It was also in this year that Judit became the youngest player of either gender (at that time) to become an International Master, earning her third and final norm in Bagnaux, France. She entered as the only girl and won the mixed world competition, the 1988 Boy’s Under-12 Championship in Romania. Never before had any girl won an overall World Championship. She topped the Challengers section of the Hastings tournament with a score of 8 out of 10; and she won yet another world title in December 1988, the World Chess Championship Under-16 in Rapid Chess.

Judit began to more seriously race toward breaking Bobby Fischer’s record for the youngest grandmaster at age 15. In 1989, she scored her first grandmaster norm in Amsterdam, Holland, at age 12. Almost two years later, she earned her second norm in a round-robin tournament in Vienna, Austria. Judit then had to procure her third and final norm at the nine-round all-play-all 1991 Hungarian National Championship in Budapest. She began the event with three draws, but hit her stride in the second half. The final round paired her against Grandmaster Tibor Tolnai, who resigned to Judit’s aggressive advanced on move forty-eight, thus rendering Judit the new record-holder. At the age of 15 years, 4 months, and 28 days, she had beaten Fischer’s record. She became the fourth woman to gain the grandmaster title, and the first woman to win a national championship. In January 1996, she had a landmark FIDE rating of 2675, making her the first woman to enter the world’s Top Ten chess players, and she has since become the highest-rated female chess player of all time.

The Polgar sisters attended the 1990 Chess Olympiad in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia (present-day Serbia) together, hoping to repeat their 1988 Chess Olympiad gold-medal performance. They managed to do so, albeit narrowly—the Soviet and Hungarian teams had accumulated the same number of points, so the gold medals would be determined by the first tiebreak. The Novi Sad

Chess Olympiad was significant because it was the last time the three Polgar sisters were to play together as a team. In the following Olympiads, through her final one in 2014, Judit would represent Hungary in the open section rather than the women's. In 2002 and 2014, she earned team silver medals, and also an individual bronze medal for her performance on Board Two in 2002.

In regards to her philanthropic contributions, she established the Judit Polgar Chess Foundation for Educational Benefits in 2012, the mission of which is to bring chess as an educational tool to children in schools throughout the world by providing a unique and complex chess curriculum and enrichment programs focusing on cross curricular links. In June 2015, Judit was appointed as the Head Coach of the Hungarian National Men's Chess Team, and led them to a team bronze medal finish in the 2015 European Team Chess Championship in Reykjavik, Iceland.

SOFIA POLGAR

B. 1974, HUNGARY / FEDERATION: HUNGARY

INTERNATIONAL MASTER, WOMAN GRANDMASTER

1989 *MAGISTRALE DI ROMA* CHAMPION, CHESS OLYMPIAD TEAM GOLD MEDALIST 1988, 1990

Sofia Polgar began to play chess at age four, and won her first national chess title by the age of five, the Girls' Under-11 Championship in Debrecen, Hungary. As her older sister Susan's chess career flourished, Sofia and her younger sister Judit began to follow closely in her footsteps. Both Sofia and Judit represented Hungary in the World Under-14 Championship. Also in 1986, Sofia and Judit accompanied Susan to play in the New York Open, in which Sofia tied for first in a reserve section. The following year, the sisters returned to New York, where Sofia and Judit both defeated their first grandmasters. She was on the gold medal Hungarian team in the 1988 Women's Chess Olympiad in Thessaloniki, Greece. The Hungarian team was comprised of nineteen-year-old Susan, twelve-year-old Judit, fourteen-year-old Sofia, and eighteen-year-old Ildiko Madl. During 1988, Sofia also won the overall (boys and girls) World Under-20 Rapid Championship in Mazatlan, Mexico.

The highlight of Sofia's chess career took place in an open tournament in the 1989 *Magistrale di Roma*, when she was 14 years old. In this tournament, five of her opponents were grandmasters, including Alexander Chernin and Yuri Razuvaev. She won eight games and drew the last. With an incredible performance rating above 2900, one of the best ever recorded, she earned the first of three norms required for the title of grandmaster. Sofia later recalled, "It was a great performance on the heels of our [the Hungarian team's] victory of Thessaloniki, and my interest in chess was then at its peak." Within a few months of her performance in Rome, Sofia achieved three additional International Master norms at the New York Open, the Berlin Summer Open, and an all-play-all invitational in Vejstrup, Denmark. In 1990 she again earned team gold for Hungary in the Women's Chess Olympiad in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia (present-day Serbia), playing on Board Three behind Susan and Judit, with an impressive score of 11 ½ out of 13, she also won an individual gold in the event. Two years later in 1992, she won silver at the Rapid Women's World Chess Championship in Budapest, Hungary. At the 1994 Moscow Olympiad, the team won the silver medal, and Sofia played all 14 games, scoring 12½ points without losing a game. This earned her the individual gold medal on Board Two.

She began to perform at an increasingly high level beyond the realm of women's chess as well, with her silver medal finish at the 1993 World Junior Championship Under-20, marking the historically best result for a girl in this type of event. Sofia moved to Israel in 1995 before playing Board One at the 1996 Yerevan Chess Olympiad in Armenia and winning yet another individual gold medal.

From 1999 to 2001, Sofia worked for Kasparov Chess Club, the Israeli branch of an international start-up company, serving as a co-editor of the news section, private instructor, private instructor, graphic designer, and online chess community builder. Through the website, she also organized international chess events and provided professional live chess commentaries. Sofia came to

focus more of her efforts on endeavors outside of chess, including studying interior design and developing a love of literature and art. She exhibited alongside such artists as Yoko Ono and Despo Magoni in a 1996 exhibition at the Borough of Manhattan Community College entitled *The Art of Chess: A Celebration*. She studied graphic design and painting and sculpture studies at the Avni Institute of Design and Arts (Tel Aviv, Israel 1998-1999) and the College of Tel-Hai (Upper Galilee, Israel, 1997-1998) before earning a diploma in Architecture and Interior Design from ORT College (Rehovot, Israel, 2004). She currently works as a graphic designer and book illustrator.

SUSAN POLGAR

B. 1969 / FEDERATION: USA

Woman Grandmaster, Woman International Master

WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 1996-1999

Susan Polgar learned chess from her parents, Laszlo and Klara Polgar, at the age of two-and-a-half. The two desired to demonstrate that genius could be produced from a person of either gender as long as he or she trained rigorously from an early age. In July 1984, World Chess Federation (*Fédération Internationale des Échecs* or FIDE) listed fifteen-year-old Susan Polgar as the world's top-ranked female player alongside Swedish player Pia Cramling. Polgar would remain in the top three on this list for the following 23 years.

Polgar is considered a pioneer in women's chess for crossing the gender barrier to become the first woman to qualify for the Men's World Championship in 1986. As Polgar wrote in her book *Breaking Through: How the Polgar Sisters Changed the Game of Chess* (2005), her efforts contributed to the 1986 FIDE congress' decision to change the name of the event from "Men's World Chess Championship" to the "World Chess Championship," which ideologically opens the competition to both male and female players. In *Women in Chess: Players of the Modern Age* (1987), John Graham discusses Susan Polgar's struggles in playing in men's tournaments:

Polgar says that the Hungarian Chess Federation denied her the women's grandmaster title in 1982 because she refused to play in the women's chess events. Polgar also objected to being listed on the women's rating list rather than the men's. When she played in the New York Open in 1985, the USCF's executive director, Gerry Dullea, received a telex which read, "Please note Polgar is no longer a woman."

Controversy arose in 1986 when FIDE granted 100 bonus Elo rating points to all active female players except Susan. The rationale was that the FIDE ratings of women were not commensurate with the rating of men because women tended to play in women-only tournaments. This decision removed Susan from her first place position in the January 1987 FIDE rating. Critics deemed the decision, which displaced Hungarian Polgar in favour of Soviet Maya Chiburdanidze, to be politically motivated.

Nevertheless, Susan continued to compete strongly. She achieved three grandmaster norms and a rating over 2500, making her the first woman to earn the grandmaster title through conventional tournament play. In 1992, FIDE held the First World Women's Blitz and Rapid Chess Championships. The new competitions were held in Budapest, Hungary, and were organized through the efforts of the Hungarian Chess Federation and Laszlo Polgar. Susan Polgar, then the number two-rated woman in the world behind her sister Judit, won both competitions. Four years later, Susan won the Classical Women's World Chess Championship, making her the only person to hold the FIDE Women's World Blitz, Rapid, and Classical titles simultaneously. She was named the United States Chess Federation's "Grandmaster of the Year" in 2003, the first woman to win this distinction. That same year, she became the first woman to win the United States Blitz

Championship (a title she procured again in 2005 and 2006). In 2004, Polgar came out of retirement to compete in the Women's Chess Olympiad, in which the United States won team silver and she earned an individual gold medal on Board One.

Susan evolved from chess competitor to chess educator and philanthropist. In 2002, she established the Susan Polgar Foundation, a nonprofit that sponsors events such as the Susan Polgar Girls' Invitational and tri-State Scholastic Chess Challenge. Serving as an organizer and sponsor, she spearheaded the first New York Mayor's Cup Grandmaster Tournament with the support of the Office of the Mayor and the Sports Commissioner of New York in 2001. As one of the strongest international round-robin tournaments in the United States, future U.S. Women's Chess Champion Irina Krush topped the competition, earning her first grandmaster norm. In 2009, Susan became Co-Chairperson of the Commission for Women's Chess for the World Chess Federation FIDE. She served as the head coach for the 2011 and 2012 National Championship college chess teams at Texas Tech University, as well as the 2013 and 2014 National Championship teams at Webster University. In 2014, Polgar received the Furman Symeon medal, awarded to the best chess coach of both male and female players. This made her the first woman to be recognized by FIDE with a top coaching medal, and the first American to earn one of the top six coach medals.

In addition to *Breaking Through: How the Polgar Sisters Changed the Game of Chess* (2005), Polgar has published such books as *A World Champion's Guide to Chess* (2005, with Paul Truong) and *Chess Tactics for Champions* (2006, also with Paul Truong). She currently heads the Susan Polgar Institute for Chess Excellence (SPICE) at Webster University in St. Louis.

... R ...

ADELE RIVERO

1908-1992 / FEDERATION: USA

UNDESIGNATED TITLE

U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1937, 1940

Belgium-born Adele Rivero allegedly learned chess to disprove the assertion of her husband, Donald Belcher, that women did not have the brains for the game. In 1934, she began to attract public attention as a chess player when she tied for second place in the first women's tournament organized by Caroline Marshall at the Marshall Chess Club in 1934. Following this tournament, Rivero joined the Marshall Chess Club, and began playing against male players. In the second Marshall Club Women's tournament held in 1936, Rivero triumphed over Mary Bain and Mrs. B.W. McCready with a perfect score of 5-0. Following the success of these events, the Club announced a third tournament, with the intended aim of determining the American woman chess champion. In 1936, future U.S. Women's Chess Champion Adele Rivero stated, "More American women would take up chess if there was anything in it for them [...] The game needs a whale of a lot of publicity just as bridge had. At the present time there are very few American women who even play a passable game." A stenographer by trade, Rivero was unimpressed with the lack of financial security available in women's chess. "But where are we to get the funds?" she asked. "A chess player, as such, has a hard time making a living. I'd go gladly if I knew I could get my job back later."

Regardless of the lack of funds in women's chess, the first Women's Chess Championship held by the American Chess Federation was won by Adele Rivero (1908-1992) in 1937, and the first National Chess Federation's Women's Chess Championship was won by Mona May Karff (1912-1998) in 1938. Following the merger of these two organizations, the United States Chess Federation held its first women's chess championship in 1940, which was won by Rivero. Though the 1940 Championship was held as a tournament, Rivero agreed to defend her title the following year in a match against a single opponent, Mona May Karff, who ultimately won the event. Sponsored by *Chess Review*, the match was held in at least five different locations, with games being played at the home of the Vice-President of the United States Chess Federation Walter Stevens, the Manhattan Chess Club, and the Queens Chess Club, among other locations. When Rivero won the 1954 Vermont Championship, she became the first woman to win an open (overall) State Chess Championship.

NANCY ROOS  
1905-1957 / FEDERATION: USA  
UNDESIGNATED TITLE  
1955 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

Though Nancy Roos is most commonly associated with her shared victory with Gisela Gresser in the 1955 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, she was also a great chess photographer. Roos ran a portrait studio in the Wilshire district of Los Angeles, California, and served as a staff photographer first for George Koltanowski's publications *California Chess News* and *Chess Digest*, and later with the *California Chess Reporter*. Her photographs were featured in the tournament book of Hollywood 1952, which was edited by R.J. Ralston and Guthrie McClain, and also appeared frequently in *Chess Review* and *Chess Life*.

In a February 2013 article on *Chess.com* entitled "An Incidental Champion," chess researcher Sarah Cohen reports that Nancy Roos was born Nancy Krotoschin in Germany in 1905. According to the November 1951 issue of *Chess Life*, Roos won the Berlin Women's Championship in 1930, and the Women's Championship of Belgium in 1938, the first officially recognized championship of this nature. Roos emigrated to New York in 1938-39. Regardless of the reason for her move, she continued to play top tier chess, participating in the second U.S. Women's Chess Championship in 1938, placing fifth out of eight participants.

Roos placed third in the 1942 U.S. Women's Chess Championship. Two years later in 1944, she moved to Los Angeles, California, and became a member of the Los Feliz Chess Club. She played in the 1944 Women's championship which ended in a three-way tie for 4-6th place with Adele Raettig and Wally Henschel. She then competed in the Pan-American games organized by Herman Steiner, placing third after the dominating forces, Mary Bain and Mona May Karff. By 1950, Roos had a national chess rating of 1721. In addition to placing seventh in the 1951 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, that year *Chess Life* reported that Roos had been elected as Vice President of the Los Feliz (Los Angeles) Chess Club.

When Roos tied Gisela Gresser for first place in the 1955 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, she was the only player to defeat Gresser in a game of the event. Roos became the first Californian woman to win the title, which was then typically won by players from the East Coast. In the article "Women's Chess Life" by Willa White Owens (*Chess Life*, October 5, 1955), it is noted that Roos was the fifth woman to have or to share the title of U.S. Women's Chess Champion, shared with Gresser. "Mrs. Roos' free and easy style of play seems not to have been affected in this tournament by the fact that she had not fully recovered from an automobile accident last July and was frequently in actual pain." This omits the fact that Roos achieved this remarkable victory near the end of her nine-year battle with cancer. Tragically, only two years after the 1955 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, Roos passed away at the age of 51.



ALEXEY ROOT (RUDOLPH)  
B. 1965 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
1989 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

Alexey Root is a Woman International Master, whose father taught her how to play at the age of five, letting her win for several years. By the time she was nine, however, she could defeat him “for real,” and began to compete in formal chess tournaments. Her father continued to support her love of the game by taking her to the local chess club in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she could further develop her skill. Root won the 1989 U.S. Women's Chess Championship. She represented the United States in the 1990 Kuala Lumpur Interzonal Chess Tournament, and the 1990 Women's Chess Olympiad. Writing for *Chess Life*, Women's International Master Beatriz Marinello described the 1993 tournament thusly: “For the spectators it was interesting to see women playing on a high level, showing that we are no longer the weaker sex in chess, even if some of us have family and children. A clear example was Alexey Root, who brought her 5 ½ month old daughter Clarissa to the tournament.”

Root received a PhD degree in curriculum from University of California, Los Angeles, in 1999. That year, she began work at the University of Texas at Dallas as a Senior Lecturer in Education and Associate Director of the Chess Program with primary responsibility for recruiting. She has been an advocate for women's chess and chess education for decades. She shared an article from the Women's Chess newsletter (distributed through the USCF executives offices and edited by Dr. Root and Sharon Burtman) with Katherine Derbyshire for *Chess Life's* column, “Women in Chess”. It recorded that “although women accounted for 4% of USCF membership, only \$25,000 (0.6%) of the \$4 million USCF budget for 1993 was designated for the Women's Championship and Interzonals.” Between the years of 1999 and 2003, Dr. Root acted as a recruiter for the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), helping to shape the three-time Pan-American championship team. Her bibliography on chess and education related topics includes six publications, such as *Children and Chess: A Guide for Educators* (2006). In a recent interview with Jennifer Shahade, Dr. Root explained, “The idea is for classroom educators to be confident with chess to teach their own lessons through it in class rather than bring people in from outside the school. Most programs that you are talking about are located in big metropolitan areas, like San Francisco, Dallas, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. But not all communities have that pool of chess players to draw from.” Dr. Root is a Senior Lecturer in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas, and teaches an online class as part of the university's TeleCampus program to educators to use chess as a tool for learning.

MARY RUDGE  
1845-1919 / FEDERATION: GREAT BRITAIN  
UNDESIGNATED TITLE  
1897 INTERNATIONAL LADIES' CHESS CONGRESS CHAMPION

Mary Rudge learned to play chess from her elder sisters, who had been taught by their father. The first record of Rudge's chess play is a correspondence tournament in 1872. She quickly distinguished herself, competing in local women's tournaments as well as with men. She entered British County Chess Competitions by August 1874, when she played in Class II at the Meeting of the Counties' Chess Association in Birmingham, England. By 1875, Rudge had moved to Bristol, England, where she benefited tremendously from the Bristol Chess Club (est. 1829-30), which had begun admitting women players in 1872. As of September 1889, she was living in Clontarf, Ireland, where she published a chess composition in the *Clontarf Parochial Magazine*. Also in that year, she gave a simultaneous display in which she won all six games, which some scholars speculate may have made her the first woman in the world to perform a simultaneous exhibition. Competing in the second-class tournament of the 1890 Counties Chess Congress in Cambridge, England, Rudge won third place with 9 ½ points in a field comprised of five men, five women, and three "reverend gentlemen." By this time, Rudge was regarded as "the leading lady player of the world," and was "known throughout the length and breadth of the land," according to *British Chess Magazine* (1890). She tied for first place in Class II at the 1896 Southern Counties' Tournament at the Imperial Hotel, with a score of 6 ½.

Rudge is perhaps best known as the winner of the 1897 International Ladies' Chess Congress. The event was the first international tournament, and had been organized by the Ladies' Chess Club of London in honor of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Twenty women from nine different countries (United States, Canada, Germany, Italy, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Scotland, and Ireland) competed in the tournament. Rudge topped the competition with a score of 18 ½ out of 19, followed by L.M. Fagan of Italy with 5 ½, Miss Thorold of Great Britain with 14, and Harriet Worrall of the United States with 13. Though criticisms rooted in sexism were aimed at the tournament, stating among other concerns that the players might "collapse with nervous strain at having to play two rounds a day for ten days," the tournament served as a forerunner to the Women's World Chess Championship. Nevertheless, women-only chess tournaments have since come under fire due to the possibility that they may prevent women from achieving their full potential by preventing them from competing alongside male players with higher ratings. An August 1897 *British Chess Magazine* that recapped the events of the 1897 tournament quoted the words of an unnamed observer at the competition who declared, "She doesn't seem to care so much to win a game as to make her opponent lose it." Rudge was rather distinct as a nineteenth-century female chess player, for she appears to have achieved her success without the advantage of a male sponsor. She travelled extensively throughout her chess career, acting as an ambassador of the game who "did good service to chess," as one document reports after her 10-month stay in Dublin, Ireland.

Following the death of her sister Caroline in 1900, Rudge's health quickly deteriorated, and she moved, at some point, to the British Home for Incurables, Steatham before passing away in Guys Hospital in London on November 22, 1919.

... S ...

DIANE SAVEREIDE

B. 1954 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER

U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 1975, 1976, 1978, 1981, 1984, FIFTH PLACE 1979 INTERZONAL CHESS TOURNAMENT

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Diane Savereide of California was instrumental in transforming the United States into a serious contender on the world's stage, which had long been dominated by the Soviet bloc. In the February 1981 issue of *Chess Life*, she related a narrative that revealed the international opinion about American chess—During a game of the 1976 Women's Interzonal Chess Tournament in Tbilisi, Georgia, Georgian player Maya Chiburdanidze offered Savereide a draw, which she accepted. This enraged Chiburdanidze's coach, Grandmaster Eduard Gufeld, who instructed her afterward to "Never offer a draw to an American!"

In addition to becoming the second American woman to achieve a master's rating, and the first to reach a rating over 2300, peaking at 2347 in November 1984. Also the first U.S. Women's Chess Champion from California since Nancy Roos's 1955 victory, Savereide won five U.S. titles between 1975 and 1984. Savereide played a total of 70 games in U.S. Women's Chess Championships, the fifteenth most of any player as of 2010, earning 51½ points. In 1975, she won the first U.S. Women's Chess Championship in which she competed, scoring 7½ out of 10. At 19 years of age, the new champion was the then-youngest U.S. Women's Chess Champion, earning her a spot as a world-title qualifier.

Savereide won the Marshall Chess Club Women's Invitational in 1976 and 1977. She represented the United States in the 1976 Interzonal in Tbilisi, Georgia, and 1979 Interzonal in Alicante, Spain, where she finished fifth with a plus score against the Soviet representatives. At the age of 26 in 1981, she continued her monopoly on interzonal competition finishing first in the U.S. Women's Invitational Championship held in Brigham City, Utah. This tournament was considered the then-strongest women's tournament in U.S. history, as most participants held candidate master ratings, and four were Woman International Masters—Savereide, Rachel Crotto, Ruth Haring, and Ruth Donnelly. In the October 1981 issue of *Chess Life*, Alison Bert praised Savereide's playing style: "She has an acute sense for tactical possibilities and a penchant for exploiting even the most subtle inaccuracies, particularly in the opening stages of the game."

Savereide played first board for every United States Women's Chess Olympiad team between 1976 (the first year in which the Men's and Women's Chess Olympiads were held at the same time) and 1984, then played second board in 1988. She has played a total of 71 games, earning a total of 37½ points. In 1984, she won her fifth and final U.S. Women's Chess Championship at the University of California at Berkeley, at 29 years of age.

After failing to turn professional in the mid-1980s, Savereide began to pursue a more lucrative career as a computer programmer with NASA, then as a software developer in Los Angeles. She was inducted into the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame in 2010.

JOAN K. SCHMIDT  
FEDERATION: USA  
UNDESIGNATED TITLE  
1972 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP BRILLIANCY PRIZE RECIPIENT

Joan Schmidt of Florida was one of North Carolina's most active female chess players. In 1970, Schmidt was ranked the 20th best woman in the United States. Also in that year, she was placed second after G. Simms in the Amarillo (Texas) Championship. In a 1971 *Chess Life & Review*, Schmidt was listed as winning the 109 postal chess tournament with a score of 5 ½ -½.

In the 1972 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, the Brilliancy Prize was awarded to Schmidt for her sensational win over Susan Sterngold of Madison, Wisconsin. This prize was donated by Walter Goldwater of New York City. Schmidt ultimately placed sixth in the tournament, and was ranked the 16th best woman chess player in the United States that year. In 1974, Schmidt tied for first with Ken Collins in the Delightfully Different Durham Chess Open; that year, she placed seventh in the 1974 U.S. Chess Championship.

BARAKA SHABAZZ  
B. CA. 1967 / FEDERATION: USA  
UNDESIGNATED TITLE  
1981 U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITOR

The record for first African-American woman to reach the rank of USCF expert (2000 Elo points) belongs to Baraka Shabazz of Denver, Colorado. Born Christine Barker, she adopted the name Baraka (meaning “blessed/blessing”) Shabazz after her mother’s boyfriend Yusef Shabazz became a stepfather figure to her. As a child, Shabazz spent her years in Anchorage, Alaska, where her stepfather introduced her to chess a few days before Christmas in 1977. As Shabazz recalled in chess journalist Joseph McLellan’s 1981 article for *The Washington Post*,

He [Shabazz’s stepfather] went out and bought us a chess set, and he gave it to my sister and me and said, “Here, play chess.” We told him, “We don’t know how to play,” so he showed us how the pieces work and said, “You have to get your opponent’s king,” and that was the first time I played. Six weeks after February 16, 1978, I entered my first chess tournament and won three games out of five.

By the time she was 15, Shabazz was the sixth-ranked female chess player in the United States. When Washington veteran player Paul Glass was asked if he knew of Shabazz, he responded, “Yes, I know Barakka. The little girl who’s a candidate master. [...] I started the first game [I played against her] expecting an easy win. I didn’t know what hit me. The second time at least I knew what hit me.”

Shabazz’s skill in chess became so prodigious that her family elected to move to cities where she could compete and progress, proceeded first to Los Angeles, then to Washington, D.C. In addition to her parents’ support, she became the recipient of funding from an array of supporters. Funds were allotted to her by Eartha Kitt, offers of coaching were extended from International Master Jeremy Silman and National Master Kenneth Clayton, and the Oakland Mayor Lionel Wilson even paid the Shabazz family’s rent bill from a community fund. In August 1981, Howard University hosted a “Baraka Shabazz Day” to commemorate her impending trip to the United Kingdom to compete in the first World Under-16 Girls’ Chess Tournament, in which Shabazz was to share third place out of a field of 32 competitors. According to multi-time Women’s World Chess Champion Susan Polgar’s book, *Breaking Through: How the Polgar Sisters Changed the Game of Chess* (2005), Shabazz drew a game against Susan Polgar in the final round of the 1981 World Under-16 Girls’ Championship in Westergate, England (West Sussex). Fifteen-year-old candidate Master Shabazz was able to play in the 1981 U.S. Women’s Chess Championship held in Brigham City, Utah, making her the first African-American woman to compete in the event, followed by Collette McGruder eight years later. The October 1981 issue of *Chess Life* reported how spectators closely followed Shabazz’s progress throughout the tournament, as articles about her had appeared in such major publications as *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *People Magazine*; she had also been interviewed by television shows like *Good Morning America* and *The Tonight Show*.

Unfortunately, following her last-place finish in the U.S. Women's Chess Championship, her family experienced increased financial difficulties. Shabazz began to even more acutely feel the pressure of her position, and after playing her last game in 1983, she disappeared from the chess world. "I felt I represented blacks, children of all creeds, females, everyone," she recalled in a 1988 interview with *The Washington Post*. "It seemed as though chess was stopping me from relaxing. Maybe there were other things, but at the time, I thought it was just chess. I wanted to go back to school, and I couldn't do that. I couldn't do the things that other black American kids did."

JENNIFER SHAHADE  
B. 1980 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN GRANDMASTER, INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 2002, 2004

With a father who is a three-time Pennsylvania State Champion and a brother who is an International Master and U.S. Chess League and U.S. Chess School organizer, Jennifer Shahade was raised with an intense love of the game. Shahade is a two-time U.S. Women's Chess Champion. She became the first woman to win the U.S. Junior Open in 1998. In 2002 and 2004, Shahade outpaced the competition to become U.S. Women's Chess Champion, with the 2002 competition being the strongest round robin women's field to date in the United States. Additionally, she has represented the United States in three Chess Olympiads (200-2004), scoring an excellent 58%.

Also in 2002, Shahade received a degree in comparative literature from New York University. Her writing on chess has appeared in the *New York Times*, *New In Chess*, the *L.A. Times*, *Games Magazine*, *Cardplayer Magazine*, *The PokerStars Blog*, and *Chess Life Magazine*. She is the Editor of *Chess Life Online*, Board Member of the World Chess Hall of Fame, and the Mind Sports Ambassador at PokerStars. She is the author of books such as *Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport* (2015), co-author of *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Chess* (2009), and *Play Like a Girl!: Tactics by 9 Queens* (2011). Author royalties of the latter benefit 9 Queens, a non-profit Shahade co-founded with Jean Hoffman in 2007 to promote chess, especially to girls and at-risk youth. Shahade is also a respected chess journalist and editor for *Chess Life Online*. As a poker player, Shahade has won numerous championships, including the first Open Face High Roller Championship in Prague.

In addition to these endeavors, Shahade has been a multi-time Resident Grandmaster of the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis (CCSCSL). From 2009 to 2013, she served as Chair of the U.S. Champions Committee, held at the CCSCSL. Shahade has been a commentator for the U.S. Chess Championship and U.S. Women's Chess Championship from 2009 to 2014, as well as the Sinquefeld Cup from 2013 to 2014. She has contributed both writing and artwork to the World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF)'s recent exhibition, *Ladies' Knight: A Female Perspective on Chess* (October 29, 2015 - May 1, 2016).

ANNA SHAREVICH  
B. 1985 / FEDERATION: USA  
WOMAN GRANDMASTER  
BELARUSIAN WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 2002, 2005, 2007, 2011

Hailing from Brest, Belarus, Anna Sharevich is a prolific chess champion. She won the Belarus Women's Chess Championship in 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2011, and represented Belarus in the Women's Chess Olympiads six times, scoring 67%. At the age of 21, she earned the Woman Grandmaster title in 2006. Several years later, Sharevich transferred to the United States Chess Federation (US Chess) on April 16, 2014. As a resident of Saint Louis, Missouri, Sharevich has competed in the 2012 and 2013 Pan American Intercollegiate Chess Tournaments on behalf of Lindenwood University, from which she earned a master's degree in Public Administration. She has also competed on behalf of the Webster University Chess teams, joining the Susan Polgar Institute for Chess Excellence (SPICE) at Webster University in 2014, and competed in the 2014 Pan American Intercollegiate Chess Championship. Additionally, Sharevich was a member of the Saint Louis Arch Bishops, the United States Chess League Team for the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis (CCSCSL), which won the 2014 United States Chess League Championship. Additionally, she was a member of the Saint Louis Arch Bishops, winners of the 2014 U.S. Chess League Championship.

Sharevich competed for the U.S. Women's Chess Championship for the first time in 2015, finishing fifth with a score of 6 ½ out of 11. With a United States Chess Federation rating of 2367, she joins one of the most competitive fields to date in competition for the 2016 U.S. Women's Chess Championship title, taking place from April 13 to April 30, 2016.

ANTOANETA STEFANOVA  
B. 1979 / FEDERATION: BULGARIA  
GRANDMASTER  
WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 2004-2006

Antoaneta Stefanova won the Girls Under-10 section of the 1989 FIDE World Youth Chess Festival for Peace in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. She first represented Bulgaria in the women's division of the biennial FIDE Chess Olympiads in 1992, and went on to represent her country in twelve Chess Olympiads between 1992 and 2014, including playing in the open competition in 2000. Stefanova achieved the Grandmaster title by earning her first norm tying for second at the 1997 Hawaii International. She won her second norm in a round-robin tournament in Salou, Spain; and her third norm came in the 2001 Andorra Open, in which she tied for first. She was awarded the Grandmaster title in 2002 at age twenty-three, becoming the eighth woman to earn the title. In July of 2002, Stefanova won the Wismilak International Chess Tournament, a category 8 round-robin tournament in Surabaya, Indonesia, scoring 9 ½ out of 11 with a performance rating of 2750. Also in 2002, Stefanova won the third European Individual Women's Chess Championship in Varna, with a score of 7 wins, 4 draws, and 0 losses. Subsequently, she was awarded the Grandmaster title in 2003. Stefanova won the 2004 Women's World Chess Championship, a "knockout" tournament held in Elista, Russia. She defeated International Master Ekaterina Kovalevskaya of Russia in the final four-game match with 2 wins, 1 draw, and 0 losses.

In *Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport* (2005), Woman Grandmaster Jennifer Shahade noted Stefanova's unusual tendency to travel to tournaments unaccompanied, to which the champion commented, "When I bring a coach I often feel more responsible for my results. I can easily become nervous and play badly." Stefanova was eliminated in the early rounds of the 2006 Women's World Chess Championship, in Ekaterinburg, Russia, and the 2008 Women's World Chess Championship, in Nalchik, Russia. In 2008 Stefanova won the North Urals Cup, held in Krasnoturinsk, Russia, which had three other Grandmaster, including the former Women's World Champion, Xu Yuhua of China, three International Masters, and one Woman Grandmaster in the eight-player field. In 2012, Stefanova proved victorious in the Women's World Rapid Chess Championship. She was the runner-up in the Women's World Chess Championship 2012, losing to Anna Ushenina in a rapid chess playoff.

SUSAN STERNGOLD

B. 1949 / FEDERATION: USA

UNDESIGNATED TITLE

1971 NORTH OHIO OPEN CHESS CHAMPION, 1971 ROMEOVILLE CHESS OPEN CHAMPION

Susan Sterngold hailed from Madison, Wisconsin, and entered into the top ranks of U.S. women's chess gradually. In the 1970 20<sup>th</sup> Annual United States Amateur Championship in Chicago, she lost to Helen Warren in Group Two by half a point. In 1971, Sterngold took home the women's trophy in the North Ohio Open. That same year, she won the women's trophy in the second Romeoville Open, held in Romeoville, Illinois. In 1972, she was rated as the tenth-best U.S. woman player with a rating of 1759. The May 31, 1972, article of the *St. Petersburg Times* records Sterngold's participation in tournament play against premiere competitors, sharing second place in the 1972 Women's Championship with 14-year-old Rachel Crotto behind Gisela Gresser. In an article for *Chess Life*, tournament director Bob Braine wrote, "It was a first time for Susan Sterngold who seems to prefer a draw to a fight, but she is naturally talented and finished in a tie for □ [*sic*]. She plays an interesting game." Two years later, she placed ninth in the 1974 U.S. Women's Chess Championship. She was invited to play the following year as well, which took place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and was won by Diane Savereide of California.

... T ...

BATTSETSEG TSAGAAN

B. 1972 / FEDERATION: USA

WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER

1987 MONGOLIAN WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION

A household name in her native city of Darkhan, Mongolia, Battseteg Tsagaan has won the Women's Mongolian Chess Championship seven times. Chess runs in Tsagaan's family, as she learned how to play chess at the age of four from her father, who brought her with him to play games in the park to unwind after he got off work. Boosted to fame by a newspaper article that told of a young girl genius after she had won her first trophy, she soon received formal training. In the seventh grade, her father hired a coach named Sukhbaatar, who taught her opening knowledge. Tsagaan initially had disappointing tournament results, partly because she was accustomed to the more boisterous environment of playing in the park. Fortunately, her play soon improved tremendously, and in 1984, she became Women's Champion of Darkhan. In 1987, she played in her second Women's Championship of Mongolia and won after having placed fifth the previous year. She thus became the youngest Mongolian to achieve the title of master. She continued to win the Mongolian Women's Championship a record-breaking six more times.

Tsagaan traveled independently to various events, such as the 1989 Tonshuul-International Tournament in 1989, Gdansk in 1989, the 33rd Chess Olympiad in Kalmykia, and so on. In addition, Tsagaan ranked ninth on FIDE's world-wide list for women under 20 in 1990, the same year that she became the first Mongolian to win a zonal championship. From this event, she achieved the title of Woman International Master. Further solidifying 1990 as her career highlight year, she represented Mongolia at the Chess Olympiad in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia (present-day Serbia), scoring 9 ½ out of 13 on first board against grandmaster opponents. The Mongolian team placed first in the Olympiad's second division that year.

Although increased international recognition of her chess play contributed to the Mongolian government's decision to allocate additional resources to the game, she and her family decided to emigrate to the United States in the mid-1990s due to Mongolia's political situation. She is now an alumnus of the Pan-American Intercollegiate Championship for the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and has counted her second place finish in the 1992 World Collegiate Championship as the accomplishment that means the most to her.

... X ...

XIE JUN

B. 1970 / FEDERATION: CHINA

GRANDMASTER

WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 1991-1996, 1999-2001

Xie Jun was born in the midst of China's Cultural Revolution in an army hospital in Baoding, 120 kilometers from Beijing, where her father was stationed. Xie uses this politically potent exposition as an explanation for her first name, Jun, which is traditionally given to boys rather than girls: "During this turbulent period in modern Chinese history, it was common to minimize the differences between men and women, and this was also reflected in the names given to newborns."

When Mao Zedong died in 1976, and the ban on board games was lifted, six-year-old Xie learned *xiangqi*, a game in the same family as chess. At eleven, she won Beijing's girl's championship in *xiangqi*. Chess trainers recruited the promising young player. By 1984, she had become the National Girls' Under-16 Champion with a perfect score of 9 out of 9, qualified for the Women's Chess Championship, and become the youngest Chinese national master at age 14. Xie later achieved the title of Woman International Master title in 1989. With a FIDE rating over 2400, she automatically qualified for the 1990 zonal tournament in Malaysia, in which she tied for first place with fellow Chinese competitor Peng Zhaoqin with a score of 9 ½ out of 10. The year 1991 proved to be an excellent one for Chinese chess. Xie became the first Asian player to win the title of Women's World Champion, ending 41 continuous years of Soviet domination of the title, as well as Maya Chiburdanidze's 13-year reign. Additionally, three Chinese female players qualified for the Candidates Tournament, and the Chinese Women's team placed third in the Chess Olympiad. Xie Jun's pride and excitement from her win in the championship carried to the 1992 Women's Chess Olympiad, where she would earn a bronze medal for her performance on Board One.

Xie continued her successful streak by defending her Women's World Chess Championship title for the first time in 1993, winning more easily than her first World Championship. This time, the 23-year-old defeated Georgian Woman Grandmaster Nana Ioseliani with a score of 8 ½ to 2 ½ in Ioseliani's second unsuccessful challenge for the title. Xie then earned the title of ("men's") International Grandmaster in the summer of 1994, and continually bested top male players through various events, as in her victory over Grandmaster Boris Spassky in Game 27 of the fourth Ladies against Veterans tournament in Prague (1995). Her third Women's World Chess Championship title came in 1999, and her fourth in 2000 against Chinese player Qin Kanying in the first FIDE knock-out championship.

Xie is one of only three women to have two Women's World Chess Championship reigns (the others being Elizaveta Bykova and Hou Yifan). She lost the Women's World Chess Championship title to Susan Polgar of Hungary in Jaén, Spain, (1996) with a score of 8 ½-4 ½, Xie but regained the title in 1999 by defeating another championship finalist, Alisa Galliamova (8 ½-6 ½), after Polgar refused to accept match conditions and forfeited her title. She is considered a strongly contributing factor in the Chinese women's team's gold medal victory at the 1998 Chess Olympiad in Elista, Kalmykia, Russia.

XU YUHA  
B. 1976 / FEDERATION: CHINA  
GRANDMASTER  
WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 2006-2008

In 1998, Xu Yuha won the Asian Women's Chess Championship in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, earning her the Woman Grandmaster title. In 2000, Xu won the first biennial Women's World Cup, held in Shenyang, China, by defeating Natalia Zhukova of Ukraine by a score of one win and one draw in the two-game final match. In the 2002 Women's World Cup, held in Hyderabad, India, Xu defeated Antoaneta Stefanova of Bulgaria in the two-game final match by a score of 1 win and 1 draw. Xu was a member of the Chinese women's teams that won the gold medal at the Chess Olympiads in 2000, 2002, and 2004.

Xu began competing in the Women's World Chess Championship "knockout" tournaments in 2000, advancing to the third round in 2000 in New Delhi, India, the semi-finals in 2001 in Moscow, Russia, and the quarterfinals in 2004 in Elista, Russia. The 2006 Women's World Chess Championship, held in Ekaterinburg, Russia, included two former champions (Maya Chiburdanidze of Georgia and Zhu Chen of China), the reigning champion (Stefanova), and a future champion (Alexandra Kosteniuk of Russia). In the final four-game match, Xu defeated Alisa Galliamova of Russia by a score of two wins, one draw, and zero losses. With her victory, Xu earned the (men's) International Grandmaster title. Xu was eliminated in the second round of the 2008 FIDE Women's World Chess Championship, held in Nalchik, Russia, ending her reign. Xu, who was four months pregnant at the time of the 2006 Women's World Chess Championship, was honoured as one of the torchbearers for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. She won the second FIDE Women Grand Prix, held in Nanjing, China, in 2009, and continues to play for Zhejiang Chess Club in the China Chess League. In *Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport* (2005), chess champion and author Jennifer Shahade perceived Xu as "free-spirited". Xu also remains a well-rounded individual—she has a Bachelor of Law, Jurisprudence from Peking University (2004), and a Master of Literature: Chinese Linguistics from Peking (2011).

... Z ...

ANNA ZATONSKIH

B. 1978 / FEDERATION: USA

INTERNATIONAL MASTER, WOMAN GRANDMASTER

U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011

Shortly after moving to the United States from the Ukraine in 2002, Anna Zatonskih made American history as part of the 2004 U.S. Women's Chess Olympiad team. Since the first Women's World Chess Olympiad held in 1957, no U.S. women's team had captured a medal. At the 36th Chess Olympiad Zatonskih joined Susan Polgar, Irina Krush, and Jennifer Shahade to win a team silver medal for the United States in Calvia, Spain. Zatonskih established a strong foundation for the team by scoring 4 ½ points in the first five rounds, and was the last player to score a win in the final round to guarantee the team a medal. In the Dresden Chess Olympiad of 2008, Zatonskih won the gold medal on Board Two, helping the U.S. secure a team bronze medal, only the second U.S. women's team medal in history. She considers these Olympiad event to be the major highlights of her chess career.

Zatonskih won the 2006 U.S. Women's Chess Championship by defeating Rusudan Goletiani. She secured her next championship in 2008 in a controversial "Armageddon playoff." After tying for first place with her former Olympiad teammate Irina Krush in the championship tournament, the two faced off in a tie-breaker to determine the victor. With Krush's time run out, Zatonskih won dramatically with only one second left on her clock. In 2009, Zatonskih defended her title, leading from start to finish with a final score of 7 ½ out of 8. Zatonskih and Krush's rivalry reached its zenith between 2008 and 2011—a 2010 article in *The New York Times* likened their contention to the rivalries between men champions Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky, and Anatoly Karpov and Veselin Topalov. By 2011, Zatonskih was ranked among the top ten female players in the world. Including the tiebreak and playoff matches, Zatonskih played 19 games over a two-week period to win the 2011 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, held at the newly-opened Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis (CCSCSL). Unlike her near-perfect U.S. Women's Chess Championship title wins in 2006, 2007, and 2009, Zatonskih's road to the 2011 U.S. Women's Chess Championship finals was littered with losses and draws. Earning her fourth title "took more energy than any other U.S. Championship," she noted. "This one I had to suffer. I had to struggle. I will remember this one more than the rest." Zatonskih enters the 2016 U.S. Women's Chess Championship with an impressive USCF rating of 2544, making her the highest-rated seed in the competition.

IRYNA ZENYUK  
B. 1986 / FEDERATION: USA  
CANDIDATE MASTER, WOMAN INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
SIX-TIME U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITOR

Iryna Zenyuk's two primary goals are to become a major chess champion and to advance renewable energy technology through her academic research. Zenyuk is accustomed to working autonomously—At the age of eight, her father passed away and her mother moved to the United States, leaving Iryna and her brother alone in Ukraine until Iryna could join her six years later in 2001. “It taught me to be independent,” she explains. She has used her independence and ambition to become the first woman to win the Jerry Simon Memorial in 2006. The following year, she became the 2007 MVP and Best 4th Board of the NY Knights chess Team. Additionally, she earned an impressive performance rating of 2450 in the 2008 Berkeley International. Finally, she has competed in the U.S. Women's Chess Championship at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis (CCSCSL) on six occasions (2009-2014).

Zenyuk balances the highest level of chess play with the highest level of scholarly study, having earned her PhD in Mechanical Engineering from Carnegie Mellon University in 2013. She plans to use this degree to develop ways to make renewable energy more prevalent, thereby promoting sustainable solutions to the current economic crisis. Zenyuk defines her interests in this way: Chess is her love, but mechanical engineering will give her the means to give back to society. She further delineates her attitudes toward chess and her academic career in this way: “I am very passionate about the research I am doing in electrochemistry and energy storing devices and am planning to remain in academia—eventually getting a tenure-track faculty position, which is extremely competitive and requires a high degree of dedication. Academic research and chess are very similar if one comes to compare them. They both are intellectually stimulating and competitive. To become good in either endeavor, one needs to spend thousands of hours in deliberate practice. What I really like about chess and academia careers is there are objective factors to determine your rank, in chess being rating and in academia being your publications. Both activities take place in relatively small communities; it is almost like being a part of a big family. Most importantly, the two fields are all about solving problems, and it is no surprise that I really enjoy both.”

ZHU CHEN  
B. 1976 / FEDERATION: QATAR  
GRANDMASTER  
WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPION 2001-2004

From a young age, Zhu Chen competed in *xiangqi*, a strategy board game in the same family as chess. In the two decades following 1981, her interests shifted from *xiangqi* to chess, which coincided with a rapid rise in the number of casual chess players in China. Numbers rapidly increased from several thousand to five million. In 1988, Zhu became the first Chinese player to win an international chess championship, the Girls' Under-12 section of the FIDE World Youth Chess Festival for Peace, in Romania. Following this victory, the Chinese government summoned her to train in the capital. During this intense period of training, she reported being so exhausted at the end of eight-hour days that she would collapse into bed only to dream of more chess variations. She won the World Junior Girls Chess Championship in 1994 and 1996. However, Zhu experienced a number of professional setbacks, such as being knocked out of the first round of play at the 2000 World Championship in New Delhi, India. Nevertheless, in 2001, she defeated Russian Alexandra Kosteniuk by 5-3 in Moscow, Russia, to become China's second Women's World Chess Champion, and its 13th grandmaster.

In 2004, following a three-year hiatus in scheduling a women's championship, FIDE again held a knockout tournament, in Batumi, Georgia. Citing the short one-month advance notice given to players, security issues with the site, and her pregnancy, Chen declined to participate, thus ending her reign as champion. In June 2004, she famously (and unsuccessfully) played two games against "Star of Unisplendour", the chess computer of advanced AMD 64 bit 3400+CPI and 2GB RAM combined with the chess engine Fritz 8. Zhu married Qatari Grandmaster Mohamad Al-Modiahki (whom she first met in a youth tournament in Malaysia in 1994) and, in 2006, she became a Qatari citizen, beginning to play for Qatar. Chen's relationship with Mohamad Al-Modiahki plays a large role in Chen's first book, an autobiography which translates as *Lay [the] Piece Without Regrets: Waits and Dreams of a Mermaid* (2003).

Jennifer Shahade perceives a disconnection between Zhu's personality and her style of chess play. In *Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport* (2005), she writes, "Her chess control contrasts with her lifestyle, in which she frequently defies convention. Once she shaved off all her hair. In FIDE's official yearbook, the photos of the women's world champions throughout history include a black-and-white shot of a bald Zhu. [...] I asked if she were taking some kind of feminist stand, but she assured me that she 'wasn't trying to make any statement' and 'just got bored of the same haircut'. A little later, after thinking it over silently, she told me, 'Shaving off all my hair is an expression of my individuality, and you can also see this in my chess career.'"