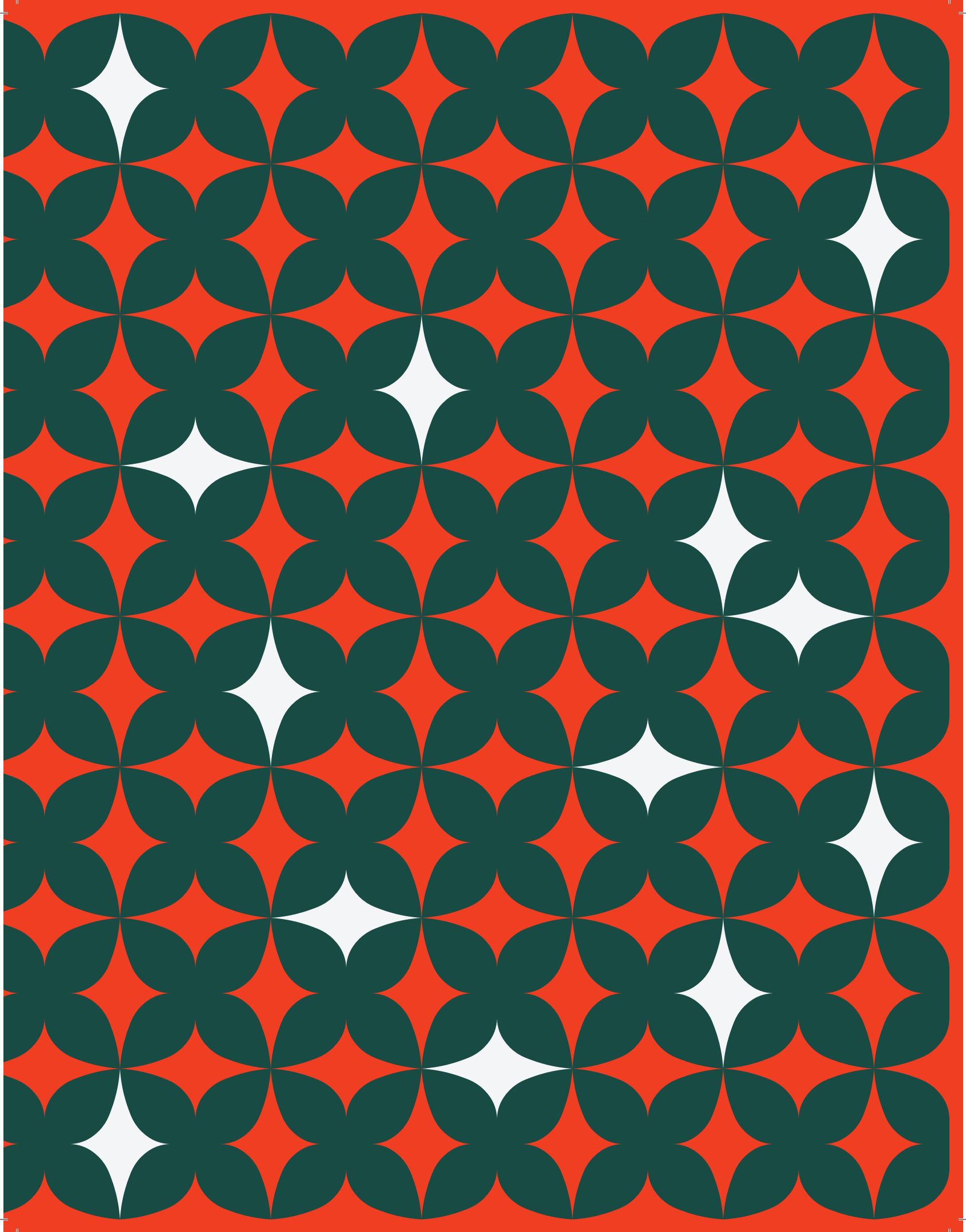


# CLASH FOR THE CROWN



*CLASH FOR THE CROWN:  
CELEBRATING CHESS  
CHAMPIONS* EXPLORES  
THE STORIED  
HISTORIES OF THE  
WORLD CHESS  
CHAMPIONSHIPS  
AND THE  
WOMEN'S  
WORLD CHESS  
CHAMPIONSHIPS  
FROM THEIR  
ORIGINS TO THE  
PRESENT DAY.

## WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP TIMELINE



Text by IM John Donaldson

### 1886

The first official match for the World Championship was held in 1886 between Johannes Zukertort and Wilhelm Steinitz with the players competing in New York, Saint Louis, and New Orleans. Zukertort took the early lead, but Steinitz rallied during the Saint Louis stage and went on to win the title.

### 1889

Steinitz successfully defended his title against the Russian challenger Mikhail Chigorin. Held in Havana, the competition was close throughout until the American world champion (Steinitz became a citizen in 1888) pulled away at the end to win 10  $\frac{1}{2}$ –6  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

### 1890–91

Steinitz once again retained his title, this time in an unexpectedly tough battle against the British master Isidor Cunsberg. Organized by the Manhattan Chess Club of New York, it was closely contested throughout, only ending when a draw in game 19 put Steinitz on top 10  $\frac{1}{2}$ –8  $\frac{1}{2}$ .



Since 1886, the game's most legendary players have fought for the title of world chess champion. The creativity and excitement of the championships draw the attention of chess fans year after year, and many of the remarkable games played in the championships are among the most celebrated in history. Since 1927, the Women's World Chess Championship has been a showcase for the most talented women players in the world. From Vera Menchik to current Women's World Chess Champion Ju Wenjun, *Clash for the Crown* highlights the achievements of these trailblazing players.

Above:  
Austin Fuller,  
**Site of the 1886  
World Chess  
Championship**  
2018, Collection of  
the World Chess  
Hall of Fame

Opposite:  
Maker unknown,  
**Amber Chess Set**,  
1960, Collection of  
Magnus Carlsen,  
Photo by  
Austin Fuller

*Clash for the Crown* also has special ties to Saint Louis, the World Chess Hall of Fame's home since 2011. Today Saint Louis is known as the chess capital of the United States due to the activities of the Saint Louis Chess Campus, which have included hosting elite national and international tournaments. However, it has a long chess legacy. In 1886 Saint Louis attracted the attention of chess enthusiasts around the world as the second of three host cities (the others were New York and New Orleans) of the first World Chess Championship, which was fought between Bohemian-born Wilhelm Steinitz and Polish-born Johannes Zukertort. In

the late 19th century, Saint Louis was one of the largest cities in the United States, and it also hosted a thriving chess scene. The Saint Louis Chess, Checkers, and Whist Club, which was founded by American chess luminary Max Judd, was one of three clubs that organized the first World Chess Championship.

The Saint Louis venue for the match was the Harmonie Club, a Jewish social club located at 18th and Olive Streets (now demolished). The Saint Louis portion of the first World Chess Championship match took place at a key point in the competition. Steinitz had lost all but one of his games held in the earlier leg of the competition staged in New York; the comeback he staged in Saint Louis helped him gain the momentum to win the title of the first world chess champion. This must have delighted local chess fans—a writer for the *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* noted that, “St. Louis [was] a Steinitz town” due to patriotic pride in his being a resident of the United States.

Since the first dramatic world championship, numerous chess stars have dazzled fans of the game. *Clash for the Crown* includes trophies, medals, photos and memorabilia related to these competitions. The World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF) is organizing *Clash for the Crown* as part of the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of FIDE (*Fédération Internationale des Échecs* or the International Chess Federation), the international governing body of chess. Today FIDE stages both the World Chess Championship and the Women's World Chess Championship along with other notable chess competitions around the world. The WCHOF is grateful to FIDE for lending artifacts from its collection and for its support of this exhibition.



## 1892

Steinitz again faced off against Chigorin in Havana in the fourth world championship. The American kept his title by a score of  $12\frac{1}{2}$ – $10\frac{1}{2}$ , after the Russian blundered in the final game.



Photographer unknown, Emanuel Lasker v. William Steinitz, Philadelphia, 1894. Collection of the Cleveland Public Library

## 1894

Emanuel Lasker finally stripped Steinitz of his crown during a match divided between New York, Philadelphia, and Montreal. It featured the largest age differential (32 years) ever seen in a World Championship match.

## 1896–97

The second world champion defended his title against the first in Moscow. This marked the first time the event was held outside the Western Hemisphere. Lasker defeated Steinitz  $12\frac{1}{2}$ – $4\frac{1}{2}$ , but the latter still holds the records for being both the oldest champion (58) and challenger (60).





## 1907

One of the most lop-sided matches in World Championship history was won by Emanuel Lasker against Frank Marshall by a score of 11  $\frac{1}{2}$ –3  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Held in New York, Philadelphia, Memphis, Chicago, and Baltimore, the event was yet another example of Lasker's domination in his early World Championship matches.

## 1908

Fellow German Siegbert Tarrasch was expected to give Emanuel Lasker a tough time in their match held in Dusseldorf and Munich. However, Lasker won four of the first five games enroute to a 10  $\frac{1}{2}$ –5  $\frac{1}{2}$  victory. This match ended Tarrasch's title dreams.



Photographer unknown, Emanuel Lasker, 1885, Collection of the Cleveland Public Library

## 1909

The challenger was responsible for raising the purse before FIDE took over the World Championship in 1946. Before that it was not uncommon for a well-heeled but less qualified opponent to compete instead of a more qualified challenger. Such was the case when Lasker beat Dawid Janowski in Paris 8–2.



Meurise, Vera Menchik at the International Chess Tournament in Paris, Date unknown, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame



## 1910

One of the most dramatic matches in World Championship history took place in Vienna and Berlin. Karl Schlechter entered the tenth and final game against Emanuel Lasker needing only a draw to win the match but lost a dramatic battle. This was the first tie in the history of the World Championship.

## 1910

The French painter Leo Nardus once again sponsored Dawid Janowski for a shot at the crown, this time in Berlin. Lasker triumphed by a score of  $9\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$ , the biggest margin of victory in a World Championship.



Harris B Ewing, José Raúl Capablanca, 1915, Collection of the Library of Congress

## 1921

In Havana, José Raúl Capablanca ended Lasker's reign. The 52-year-old champion, attracted by a \$11,000 guarantee to cover his expenses and fee (\$187,000 today) agreed to a 24-game match. It was cut short after 14 games with the challenger ahead 9-5.



Martha Lasker, Hand Embroidered Tablecloth Commemorating the 1935 Moscow Chess Tournament, 1935, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, gift of John Donaldson, Photo by Austin Fuller

## WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP TIMELINE

Text by IM John Donaldson

## 1927

The inaugural Women's World Championship was held in London alongside the first Olympiad. Vera Menchik, who scored  $10\frac{1}{2}$  points, won the tournament. Born in Russia to a Czech father and English mother, she moved to England in 1921 but represented her birthplace in this competition.

## 1930

Hamburg, Germany, hosted the second championship. Menchik, now representing Czechoslovakia (whose flag she would play under until 1939), won with  $6\frac{1}{2}$  points. Fellow World Chess Hall of Famer Paula Kalmar-Wolff took second place.

## 1931

Vera Menchik again triumphed in the Women's World Chess Championship, which was held in Prague. Menchik, in her most dominating performance to date, scored eight from eight, four points ahead of second-place finisher Kalmar-Wolff.



## 1927

A fourth world champion emerged after a titanic battle between Capablanca and his challenger Alexander Alekhine. The Russian-born Alekhine, now representing France, won the marathon 34-game match held in Buenos Aires to take the title. The new champion then spent the next decade dodging a rematch.

## 1929

Capablanca was the best qualified challenger, but Efim Bogoljubow fought the next two title matches with Alekhine. The first match, held throughout Germany and Holland, saw the champion emerge with a four-point lead after twelve games and coast to victory,  $15\frac{1}{2}$ – $9\frac{1}{2}$ .



Photographer unknown, **Alexander Alekhine**, c. 1924. Collection of the Library of Congress George Grantham Bain Collection

## 1934

The return match between Alekhine and Bogoljubow was a replay of their earlier encounter. Germany was again the venue and the champion repeated his quick start, up three points after twelve games. The final score was  $15\frac{1}{2}$ – $10\frac{1}{2}$ .



Maker unknown, **Dr. Max Euwe World Chess Championship Commemorative Plate**, 1935. Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame. Photo by Austin Fuller

## 1935

One of the biggest upsets in World Championship history occurred in the fall of 1935 when Max Euwe, playing on home ground, defeated Alexander Alekhine  $15\frac{1}{2}$ – $14\frac{1}{2}$  to become the fifth titleholder.

## 1937

Alexander Alekhine became the first former world champion to regain his title, almost two years to the day he lost it. The Netherlands again hosted the match, but Alekhine easily won,  $15\frac{1}{2}$ – $9\frac{1}{2}$ .

## 1946

The death of Alexander Alekhine on March 24 in Estoril, Portugal, left the crown vacant leaving FIDE, the governing body of chess, a chance to step in and formalize the rules and regulations of the World Championship. Henceforth the title would no longer be the private property of the world champion.



Oorschot, **Max Euwe vs. Mikhail Botvinnik at the World Chess Championship**, 1948. Collection of the Dutch National Archive

## 1948

The new champion was determined by holding a five-player quintuple round robin. The contestants in the event, divided between The Hague and Moscow, were Soviets Mikhail Botvinnik, Paul Keres, and Vasily Smyslov; Samuel Reshevsky of the United States; and Max Euwe of the Netherlands. Botvinnik dominated, scoring 14 points from 20 games.

## 1951

All World Championship matches from 1951 through 1969 were held in Moscow and featured Soviet players as both champion and challenger. The matches were normally held every three years with the champion retaining the title in case of a tie. This is what happened between Botvinnik and David Bronstein who tied 12–12.

## 1954

Mikhail Botvinnik began the championship with three wins in the first four games, but challenger Vassily Smyslov battled back to tie the match with one game remaining. He could not win the last one, which meant that with the score 12–12, Botvinnik once again retained his title with a tied match.

## 1957

Vasily Smyslov emerged as the seventh player to become world champion through his convincing defeat of Mikhail Botvinnik by a score of  $12\frac{1}{2}$ – $9\frac{1}{2}$ . His reign as champion would be short as a clause in the regulations allowed the champion a rematch, a provision Botvinnik exercised.



Photographer unknown, **Vasily Smyslov vs. Mikhail Botvinnik, World Chess Championship Rematch**, 1958. Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

## 1958

Mikhail Botvinnik reclaimed his seat on the throne defeating the new champion Vasily Smyslov by a score of  $12\frac{1}{2}$ – $10\frac{1}{2}$ . Smyslov lost the first three games of the match. He rallied in the closing stages of the match but failed to close the gap.

## 1960

The match between Mikhail Botvinnik and Mikhail Tal was a clash of generations between the 48-year-old champion and 23-year-old challenger. Youth triumphed over experience as Tal won the match in convincing fashion  $12\frac{1}{2}$ – $8\frac{1}{2}$  to become the youngest ever champion at that time.

## 1961

Mikhail Botvinnik once again reclaimed his crown. Exercising the champion's right to a "revenge match" he defeated Mikhail Tal by a score of 13–8. Tal, who was hospitalized shortly before the event, lost games nine through eleven, effectively sealing his fate.



Topfoto, **Mikhail Botvinnik and Tigran Petrosian at the World Chess Championship**, Moscow, Russia, April 5, 1963. Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

## 1963

Tigran Petrosian became the ninth world champion by defeating Mikhail Botvinnik  $12\frac{1}{2}$ – $9\frac{1}{2}$ , permanently ending the latter's reign as world champion as FIDE had ended the rule allowing the titleholder to ask for a "revenge match."

## 1966

Tigran Petrosian became the first reigning FIDE world champion to win a title match by defeating Boris Spassky  $12\frac{1}{2}$ – $11\frac{1}{2}$ , extending his reign for three more years. The 36-year-old Petrosian, seven years older than his challenger, was able to use his super-solid style to good effect in matches.



## 1933

The Chess Olympiad in Folkestone, England, hosted the fourth Women's Chess Championship where Menchik demonstrated her superiority, scoring 14 out of 14 in the eight-player double round robin. This result was not a surprise as Menchik had been competing successfully in men's tournaments, the only woman of her era to do so.



Studio Herbert Vandyk, Londres, Vera Menchik, from *Le Monde des Echecs*, February 1933, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, gift of John Donaldson

## 1935

Menchik turned in another perfect result, scoring 9 from 9 in the fifth Women's World Championship held in Warsaw during the Chess Olympiad. Her younger sister Olga finished fourth in the competition with five and a half points and would also play in the 1937 Women's World Championship.

## July 1937

Vera Menchik faced her strongest rival, Sonja Graf of Germany, in a 16-game match in the Austrian resort town of Semmering. It was the second match privately organized between the players (Menchik won 3-1 in 1934) and the first recognized by FIDE. Menchik won easily 11  $\frac{1}{2}$ -4  $\frac{1}{2}$ .



Photographer unknown, Vera Menchik, Date unknown, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

## August 1937

Menchik continued her dominance in the sixth Women's World Championship held during the Stockholm Olympiad. She won the 28-player 14-round Swiss with a perfect score, four points ahead of second place Clarice Benini. Her level of play would not be matched by another woman until the rise of Nona Caprindashvili in the 1960s.

## 1939

The seventh and last pre-war Women's World Championship was held in Buenos Aires during the Olympiad and was the only time Menchik was tested in the series of competitions. She scored 18 out of 19, two points ahead of Sonja Graf who lost their individual game after blundering away a winning position.

## 1944

Vera Menchik, along with her sister and mother, was killed on June 26, 1944, by a German V-1 flying bomb that destroyed their home. Her death ended an 18-year (1927-1944) reign as women's world champion, a record which still stands today.

## 1949-50

The death of Vera Menchik left a vacancy on the throne which FIDE addressed by holding a 16-player round-robin in Moscow. Forty-five-year-old Lyudmila Rudenko of the Soviet Union won the event, scoring 11  $\frac{1}{2}$  points. Her only loss was to Gisela Cresser of the United States.



Henk Lindeboom, Clarice Benini vs. Elizaveta Bykova at the Lustrum Danlon Chess Tournament, 1960, Collection of the Dutch National Archive

## 1953

Elizaveta Bykova became the third women's world champion by defeating Rudenko 8-6 in Leningrad. This competition marked the beginning of a series of matches to determine the title which involved only Soviet players and were held exclusively in the USSR. This iron grip on the throne would last for close to four decades.

## 1956

Moscow was the location for a triangular title match between the reigning champion (Elizaveta Bykova), the former champion (Lyudmila Rudenko), and the challenger (Olga Rubtsova). The tournament of 16 games ended with the victory of Rubtsova who became the fourth women's world champion by finishing half a point ahead of Bykova.



KEYSTONE Pictures USA, Elizaveta Bykova Winner of the Women's World Chess Championship Being Presented with the Trophy from V. Ragozin, March 3, 1958, Courtesy of Alamy Stock Photos

## 1958

Elizaveta Bykova reclaimed the title by defeating Olga Rubtsova in Moscow by a score of 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ -5  $\frac{1}{2}$ . After six games, Rubtsova led 4-2, but then Bykova rallied and won six games in a row. She would hold the title for all but two years between 1953 and 1962.

## 1959

Elizaveta Bykova successfully defended her title against Kira Zvorykina in Moscow, winning by a score of 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ -4  $\frac{1}{2}$ . This was her third Women's World Championship title, establishing her as the best female player between 1948 and 1962.

## 1962

21-year-old Nona Caprindashvili became the fifth women's world champion when she convincingly defeated Elizaveta Bykova 9-2 in Moscow. A national hero in her homeland of Georgia, Caprindashvili would follow Menchik's steps and compete successfully with men.

## 1965

Caprindashvili's first challenger came from her own generation. Alla Kushnir, who would later emigrate to Israel, played against her in the Latvian capital of Riga. The challenger held her own at the beginning, with the score tied after three games, but then Caprindashvili took over, winning 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ -4  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

## 1969

After a come-from-behind victory in the Interzonal, Alla Kushnir emerged as the challenger for the World Championship. Her second encounter with Caprindashvili was similar to the first with the players tied after five games before Nona took over and won again by a score of 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ -4  $\frac{1}{2}$ .



Photographer unknown, GM Nona Caprindashvili and WGM Alla Kushnir at the 1972 Women's World Chess Championship, Riga, Latvia, 1972, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

## 1972

Kushnir emerged again as the challenger by defeating Nana Alexandria in the Candidates Final 6  $\frac{1}{2}$ -2  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The third Caprindashvili-Kushnir match saw the challenger battle back from a 5-2 deficit to pull within a point with two games remaining, but fall just short losing 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ -7  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

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Photographer unknown, **Boris Spassky as depicted in *Soviet Life***, February 1969. Published by the Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United States of America

## 1969

Boris Spassky became the tenth world champion by defeating Tigran Petrosian 12  $\frac{1}{2}$ –10  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Three years earlier, Petrosian dictated the style of play, but this time Spassky was able to demonstrate his skill in dynamic positions in a closely-fought match.

## 1972

Bobby Fischer became the eleventh world champion by defeating Boris Spassky 12  $\frac{1}{2}$ –8  $\frac{1}{2}$  in Reykjavik, Iceland. Fischer, who had never beaten Spassky before the match, became the first non-Soviet player to hold the title in 24 years and won \$153,240—the equivalent of over one million dollars today.

## 1974

Anatoly Karpov defeated Viktor Korchnoi 12  $\frac{1}{2}$ –11  $\frac{1}{2}$  to win the Candidates Final held in Moscow in the fall of 1974. Ahead by three points with seven games left, Karpov looked the easy winner. However, Korchnoi then won two games and the match went down to the wire.

## TODAY, FIDE STANDS AS A GLOBAL POWERHOUSE, UNITING 199 COUNTRIES AS AFFILIATE MEMBERS.

The founding of FIDE laid the prospects of an organized, connected, global chess community, spreading interest in the game and bringing together chess devotees from every corner of the globe. For a century, FIDE has steadily evolved, bringing about new events and competitions, spectacular matches, a unified scoring system, standardized regulations, initiatives and projects aimed at specific groups, always looking to find new ways to make the game more popular and to attract more public interest and support.

The exhibition *Clash for the Crown*, organized by the distinguished World Chess Hall of Fame in honor of 100 years of FIDE, is an important reminder of the richness of the game and what it brought to the world.

The matches for the title of world champion in chess represent the jewel of the chess world, the most anticipated and most popular chess event. These clashes epitomize the summit of intellect, endurance, and mastery, marking iconic moments in the history of the game. From the old masters and pre-FIDE world champions such as Steinitz and Morphy to the mastery of Mikhail Botvinnik, the creative genius of Mikhail Tal in the absolute category, or Vera Menchik and Nona Gaprindashvili in the women's, and other champions that followed, the matches to determine the bearer of the coveted crown are unique historic events and their analysis still produces new fascinating information.

For the U.S., the pivotal moment occurred in 1972 with the politically symbolic encounter between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky, a match that transcended chess mastery, reflecting the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Similarly, the series of matches between Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov in the 1980s and early 1990s showcased an intense rivalry that not only shaped the game's evolution but also highlighted the contrasting styles and unwavering determination of these grandmasters. Then came the new generation with Kramnik and Anand, who was later replaced by Magnus Carlsen and the current world champion Ding Liren. In all of these matches, FIDE was at the center—organizing and facilitating these events.

I am thankful to the World Chess Hall of Fame and Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield and Rex Sinquefield for organizing this exhibition and taking part in marking the centenary of the birth of FIDE.

We hope this exhibition inspires a deeper appreciation for the history of this great sport and its organization. It stands as a bridge between the past and the future, offering a window into the game's rich heritage and FIDE's profound role in the chess world. I hope you will enjoy it.



Camera Press LTD., **Nona Caprindashvili 1975**, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, PHOTOGRAPH BY TASS, CAMERA PRESS LONDON

## 1975

The mid-1970s marked the emergence of a new generation of challengers for Nona Caprindashvili. Fellow countrywoman Nana Alexandria was eight years her junior and a three-time Soviet women's champion by the age of 20. She was a formidable opponent but Caprindashvili easily handled her, winning their World Championship match 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ –3  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

## 1978

Caprindashvili's reign as women's world champion, which had lasted 15 years, ended when she was defeated by fellow Georgian Maya Chiburdanidze by a score of 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ –6  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The latter became the youngest-ever female titleholder at age 17, a record only beaten in 2010 by 16-year-old Hou Yifan.

## 1981

The Women's World Championship was again an all-Georgian affair as Maya Chiburdanidze defended her title against Nana Alexandria. The 16-game match ended 8–8 with the champion retaining the title. Unlike the World Championship, where there have been several tie matches, this is the only time this result occurred in the women's event.



Photographer unknown, Anatoly Karpov Winner of the 1975 World Chess Championship, 1975. Collection of FIDE

## 1975

The Karpov-Korchnoi Candidates Final effectively became a World Championship match when Bobby Fischer chose to not defend his title. This meant 24-year-old Anatoly Karpov became the twelfth world champion and the title returned to the Soviet Union. He is the only world champion to ascend the throne by default.

## 1978

One of the most bitter World Championship matches ever contested was held in Baguio City in the Philippines between Anatoly Karpov and Viktor Korchnoi. In 1976 the latter had defected from the Soviet Union, which declared him "persona non grata." Karpov retained his title 16  $\frac{1}{2}$ –15  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

## 1981

Merano, Italy, hosted the third Karpov-Korchnoi match. Karpov won 6–2 with 10 draws. Korchnoi, 50 when the match was played, was the oldest player to play in a World Championship match since Botvinnik in the 1960s.



Harry Benson  
**Fischer vs.  
Spassky, Game  
One, Iceland  
1972**  
Collection of the  
World Chess Hall  
of Fame  
© Harry Benson CBE

## 1984

This Women's World Championship, held in the Soviet city of Volgograd, pitted Maya Chiburdanidze against Irina Levitina. The latter, a four-time Soviet women's champion, defeated Caprindashvili, Alexandria, and Semenova to qualify for the final which she lost 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ –5  $\frac{1}{2}$ .



Maker unknown, XXIII Women's World Championship Match, Sofia, Bulgaria, 1986, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, Photo by Austin Fuller

## 1986

Sofia hosted the Women's World Championship match between reigning champion Maya Chiburdanidze and challenger Elena Akhmilovskaya. The latter had qualified by winning the Candidates Tournament earlier in the year. Chiburdanidze once again retained her title by a score of 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ –5  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Akhmilovskaya, like Levitina, later settled in the United States.

## 1988

Maya Chiburdanidze defeated Nana Ioseliani 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ –7  $\frac{1}{2}$  in a match held in Telavi, Georgia. This was Chiburdanidze's fourth successful title defense after defeating Nona Caprindashvili for the crown in 1978. The pair rank equal second in Women's World Championship victories (5) behind only Vera Menchik.



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Harry Benson  
Fabiano Caruana vs. Magnus Carlsen  
at the 2018 World Chess Championships  
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Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame  
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Photographer unknown, Anatoly Karpov Defending World Chess Champion, and Challenger Garry Kasparov during the World Chess Championship Finals, 1984. Courtesy of the Associated Press

## 1984-85

One of Fischer's conditions for a potential match in 1975 was that the match be the first to win six games (draws not counting) and not a fixed 24 games. This system was used from 1978 to 1984. It ended when the match between Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov was suspended with the score 25–23.

## 1985

The decision by FIDE President Florencio Campomanes to suspend the 1984 match, which had dragged on five months, drew controversy. Karpov was ahead 5–0 after 27 games, but then Kasparov won the 32nd followed by the 47th and 48th. Their 1985 rematch produced a new world champion as Kasparov won 13–11.

## 1986

The agreement for the 1985 match included a rematch clause, which Karpov exercised. He and Kasparov met yet again with the latter again prevailing 12½–11½. Half the match was held in Leningrad and half in London. The latter honored the centennial of Steinitz-Zukertort, the first World Championship.

# EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF WORLD CHESS CHAMPION

**John McCrary, Ph.D.**  
Past US Chess President

Since the earliest days of the game, more than 1,000 years ago, the idea of an overall “champion of chess” has existed. The notion of such a championship continued for centuries as chess spread to more nations and peoples. But before the 19th century the concept of a true “world chess championship” was limited by three factors. The first was the difficulty of long-range travel, which restricted the ability of top players to compete beyond their own areas. The second was the scarcity of chess literature—there was a lack of chess periodicals to facilitate communication among players living in distant areas. Lastly, there was an absence of accepted standard rules. By the 7th century CE, a game that was unmistakably a form of chess had appeared, with the same basic moves for king, rook, knight, and pawn as those pieces have today; however, the queen and bishop had much weaker moves.<sup>1</sup> Even after the queen and bishop assumed their more powerful modern moves around 1485 CE, for nearly four centuries thereafter there remained major regional differences in the rules for pawn promotion, castling, en passant captures, and in the criteria for, and significance of, drawn games. Those rule differences, together with the travel and communication limitations, meant that chess was really a family of regional variants, rather than a fully international game, until well into the 19th century.

Nevertheless, those issues did not deter players from recognizing individuals as the best player in the chess world at different times. In the 10th century, people from the Islamic world believed that a player named Abu Bakr bin Yahya al-Suli (d. 946) had achieved the highest level of play possible for any person, although his play was limited to that region. Through the early 1800s, several players including Ruy López de Segura (of Spain, c. 1530-c. 1580) and Italian players Giovanni Leonardo di Bona (1542-87), Paolo Boi (1528-98), and Gioacchino Greco (1600-c. 1634) gained a reputation at different times of being the overall champions of chess. But their play was only partially documented and was limited in geographic area.

Francois-Andre Danican Philidor (1726-1795) gained a reputation for superiority that lasted until the early 1800s. R. Lambe's *The History of Chess* (London 1764) said: “Mr. Philidor is a Frenchman, and supposed to be the best Chess-player in the world.” But that title for Philidor was not universally recognized, and there were strong Italian contemporaries of Philidor who did not test their skills versus him. There were still significant differences among regions on rules for pawn promotion (Philidor did not like the modern rule that allows promotion to queen when the original queen is not yet captured), stalemate, and castling; and modern rules in these areas were not fully standardized until the late 1800s.

①

This article uses the modern names for these pieces since the nomenclature of chess pieces, as distinct from their rules of movement, has varied across times and regions.

②

In standard chess terminology, a “match” is an arranged series of games between two players. Although a single game is often called a “chess match” in popular usage, in chess literature a single game is called a game, not a match.

Early in the 19th century, the Frenchman Alexandre Deschapelles (1780-1847), and later his pupil Louis de la Bourdonnais (1795-1840), were considered by some to be the world's best. In 1843, England's Howard Staunton (1810-1874) defeated the leading French player Pierre Saint-Amant (1800-1872) in “The Grand Chess Match Between England and France.”<sup>2</sup> As a result mainly of that match victory, an 1845 dinner speaker called Staunton “the champion of England, or as we might truly call him, the champion of the world.” But the reputations of these players from As-suli to Staunton were based mainly on occasional formal encounters and friendly games within a few areas, without a structured system of competitive events across nations sufficient to determine a valid world chess championship; as a result, their claims to such a title were never universally recognized.

The possibility of a valid world chess championship began to evolve during the 19th century, which was seeing major societal changes due to advances in transportation (railroads and steamships) and communication (the telegraph). These developments began to connect chess players in different nations as had never before been possible, and a truly international chess community began to evolve. By the 1840s, an explosion of chess journalism was bringing players across different countries into the discussion of topics such as a standard international code of rules. Improved transportation also stimulated a new focus on tournaments, with groups of players from different areas gathering for short periods for structured competition at a single location. These technological changes also began to affect the organization and spread of other sports and games.

As early as 1843, suggestions were being made for an international congress with players from different nations. A



Left: Maker unknown, **Susan Polgar's Trophy from the 1996 Jaén, Spain, Women's World Chess Championship**, 1996, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, Photo by Austin Fuller

Below: Pronovias, **Susan Polgar's Dress and Scarf She Wore When She Won the Women's World Chess Championship**, c. 1996, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, Photo by Austin Fuller



### 1991

The 1990s marked the start of a new era in chess. During the previous four decades, Soviet women had dominated the Women's World Championship, particularly those from Georgia. The breakup of the Soviet Union now meant that in addition to Russia, all the other former republics of the USSR would have their own representatives in the competition.

### 1991

The 1990s also witnessed a new power in women's chess. While Chinese chess has a history lasting over one thousand years, China's involvement with the Western version of the game is much shorter. The country only joined FIDE in 1975, but no nation has been more successful in female chess in the past four decades.



Artist unknown, **Women's World Chess Championship Match, Manila, Philippines**, 1991, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, Photo by Austin Fuller

### 1991

Three decades of Georgian domination of the Women's World Championship ended with Xie Jun's victory over Maya Chiburdanidze in Manila by a score of 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ –6  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Over the next 30 years, six Chinese women would hold the title.



major step toward a true world chess championship occurred when the first international tournament was held in London in 1851. Since the London 1851 tournament for the first time included top players from different nations in one event, a number of writers argued that its winner should be named world champion (or similar terms such as “champion of chess or occupier of the chess throne”). But when Germany’s Adolf Anderssen (1818-1879) won first prize in that Congress, many then argued that its knock-out format, and the absence of the strongest players from some nations including Russia, made London 1851 an insufficient event to support a world championship claim.

Paul Morphy (1837-1884) of New Orleans was the first to exploit the growth of an international chess community to establish a claim to a stronger, if unofficial, claim to the world championship. After easily winning the First American Chess Congress in 1857, he crossed the Atlantic and played formal matches and casual games against a number of the acknowledged top players in Europe, including a match win by a 7-2 margin (plus 2 draws) versus Anderssen. Morphy was unable to play some of Europe’s top players, and Staunton avoided Morphy’s challenge. But after these successes Morphy gained an international reputation of being the de facto world champion, though he did not formally claim such a title, and some people did not agree that he had earned it.



Morphy soon retired from serious chess, leaving the international chess world without a consensus world champion for many years. In the latter part of the 19th century, Wilhelm (William) Steinitz (1836-1900), a native of Prague who became a U.S. citizen in 1888, claimed that his overall competitive record constituted a retroactive claim to the world championship, dating as far back as his 1866 match victory over Anderssen. But his argument was not universally accepted; and there were debates on whether international tournaments, or two-player head-to-head matches involving a series of games should determine the world championship. The 1883 London International Tournament was proclaimed by some to be for the world championship because it included several of the acknowledged best players in the world, with the participants representing, among other areas, England, France, Russia, the United States, and Hungary. Johannes Zukertort (1842-1888) won that tournament, well ahead of Steinitz in second place; and many maintained that Zukertort’s win of that tournament thus made him the world champion. But Steinitz maintained his claim to the title based on his overall match results, arguing that tournaments could not determine a valid world championship. Steinitz and Zukertort decided to settle their rival claims in a match in 1886. Steinitz’s decisive win by five games over Zukertort in that match, which was played in New York, Saint Louis, and New Orleans, led to his being accepted as the consensus world champion; and the system of the world championship being determined in two-player matches of a series of games, rather than in tournaments, was thereby firmly established.

However, that new system created new problems. For a championship match to be arranged, the champion had to accept a challenge from a worthy contender

*Harper’s Weekly*,  
Vol. XXX, No. 1517,  
January 16, 1886,  
Collection of the  
World Chess Hall  
of Fame

### 1993

Nana Ioseliani tried to return the title to Georgia but was unsuccessful. Playing in her second title match in five years she lost to Xie Jun in Monaco by a score of 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ –2  $\frac{1}{2}$ . This was one of the most one-sided defeats in Women’s World Championship history.



Photographer unknown, Susan Polgar Crowned Winner of the 1996 Women’s World Chess Championship, 1996, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, gift of Susan Polgar

### 1996

Just when it looked like Xie Jun’s reign would continue for many years, she was decisively beaten by Susan Polgar in Jaén, Spain, by a score of 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ –4  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Susan, the eldest of the three famous Hungarian chess-playing sisters, would never have a chance to defend her title.

### 1999

Polgar’s match against Xie Jun, set for 1998, was postponed for lack of a sponsor. The following year, FIDE announced the match would be held in China. Polgar, pregnant at the time, objected to the conditions and the scheduling. She was forfeited.



Maker unknown, Emanuel Lasker's Portable Chess Set, Date unknown, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, gift of the DeLucia Family Foundation, partial and promised gift of Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefeld and Rex Sinquefeld, Photo by Austin Fuller

for the title, and the two had to agree on match terms. There was no set standard for determining what terms were fair on issues including the number of games, venue, and financial arrangements. There was also no way to determine which contenders were the most worthy challengers, and which of several challengers should have priority. The incumbent champion had full control of the process, since there was no organization that had the authority to compel a champion to agree to an appropriate challenge under conditions that were reasonable. If a champion acted unreasonably in avoiding challengers, there was no accepted way to remove his title.

In 1912 Emanuel Lasker (1868-1941), who won the world championship from Steinitz in an 1894 match and retained the title in later matches through 1910, refused a challenge from Jose Capablanca (1888-1942) because he was offended by some of Capablanca's wording during their correspondence. There were then no world championship matches before Lasker resigned the championship in 1920 in favor of Capablanca. But Capablanca was uncomfortable with gaining the championship without defeating the champion, so Capablanca and Lasker agreed to a 1921 match in which Capablanca was considered the defending champion. (Modern players consider that Lasker held the championship until his 1921 loss, but he felt he had resigned the title in 1920 as an undefeated champion, and had lost the 1921 match as Capablanca's challenger).

Capablanca was then undisputed world champion, and he attempted at the London 1922 international tournament to establish rules to govern future world championship matches. Those "London rules" signed by the top championship contenders, included a requirement that the champion could not refuse a challenge from a recognized con-



FIDE Forum, Vol. XIII, No. 4, 1999, Collection of FIDE

### 1999

FIDE, after forfeiting the reigning World Champion Susan Polgar, announced that Challenger Xie Jun would face Alisa Calliamova, whom she defeated  $8\frac{1}{2}-6\frac{1}{2}$  in a match divided between Kazan, Russia, and Shenyang, China.

### 2000

Following the lead of the World Championship, the Women's World Championship switched to a knockout format. Xie Jun defeated fellow countrywoman Qin Kanying in the finals of the 64-player event held in New Delhi by a score of  $2\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ . FIDE would not return to a two-player championship match until 2011.

### 1987

The most dramatic of the five Kasparov-Karpov World Championship matches was held in Seville, Spain. Kasparov trailed by a point with one game left meaning he had to win (the champion kept the title in case of a tie). He succeeded in one of the most memorable games in chess history.



J. De Haro, World Chess Championship, Seville, Spain, October 12-December 18, 1987, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

### 1990

The final Kasparov-Karpov match was divided between New York and Lyon. The prize fund of \$3,000,000 (equal to \$7,000,000 today) still holds the record as the largest ever. The players were tied after 17 games, but wins by Kasparov in games 18 and 20 decided the match.



Photographer unknown, Anatoly Karpov vs. Garry Kasparov in the 1990 World Chess Championship, Lyon, France, 1990, Collection of FIDE

tender who raised a \$10,000 prize fund. But there were ambiguities within those rules: a champion could play for less than \$10,000 if he chose, and still had leeway in choosing among plausible challengers. When Russian native Alexander Alekhine (1892-1946) defeated Capablanca in 1927 for the championship, he found ways to use ambiguities in the London rules avoid a rematch with Capablanca, though he had signed the London 1922 rules and played four subsequent championship matches with others.

All this changed with the death of Alekhine in 1946, which allowed FIDE to take control of the process and finally resolve the above problems. There had been suggestions for years that an international organization assume control of the world championship process, but the failure of the incumbent champions to agree to such a change had prevented its implementation even after FIDE's formation in 1924.

### 2001

The 64-player-knockout tournament in Moscow produced a new women's world champion, Zhu Chen of China, who defeated Alexandria Kosteniuk of Russia in the final. This was the first time the title was decided by a fast-play tiebreak finish after the players were deadlocked 2-2 at the end of regulation.





Photographer unknown, Garry Kasparov Winner of the 1993 Professional Chess Association Championship, 1993, Collection of FIDE

### 1993 PCA

Defending champion Garry Kasparov and challenger Nigel Short broke from FIDE over differences regarding the arrangements for the World Championship. Instead, they played their match under the auspices of their newly formed Professional Chess Association. Kasparov easily won the match, which was held in London, 12½–7½.

### 1993 FIDE

FIDE organized its own match between Jan Timman and former World Champion Anatoly Karpov, both of whom had been defeated by Short earlier in the FIDE cycle. They played in the Netherlands and Indonesia with Karpov triumphing 12½–8½. The chess world would remain split until 2006.

### 1995 PCA

The highwater mark of the PCA was the match between Garry Kasparov and Viswanathan Anand, which was held in New York at the World Trade Center. Anand led after nine games, but Kasparov took four of the next five to win 10½–7½.



Chess Life, Vol. 51, No. 8, August 1996, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, Image used with permission of US Chess

### 1996 FIDE

Gata Kamsky became only the fourth American (after Steinitz, Marshall and Fischer) to play a World Championship match when he faced Anatoly Karpov in Elista, Russia. Kamsky, who turned 22 just before the competition, fought hard to the very end but lost to his more experienced rival 10½–7½.

### 1998 FIDE

FIDE decided to experiment with the world championship format, using a 100-player knockout tournament to produce a challenger who would meet the defending champion, Anatoly Karpov. Viswanathan Anand made it through the grueling qualifier to meet Karpov, who defeated him in a rapid tiebreaker after they went 3–3 in regulation.

### 1999 FIDE

FIDE tweaked its format, retaining the 100-player knockout, while eliminating the subsequent finals match. Alexander Khalifman of Russia, who had already beaten Gata Kamsky, Boris Gelfand, and Judit Polgar, became world champion by defeating Vladimir Akopian in the final held at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas.

### 2000 Brain Games

Vladimir Kramnik pulled off a major upset by defeating Garry Kasparov in the Brain Games (the successor to the PCA) World Championship held in London by a score of 8½–6½. So great was Kramnik's domination that Kasparov did not win a single game in the match.

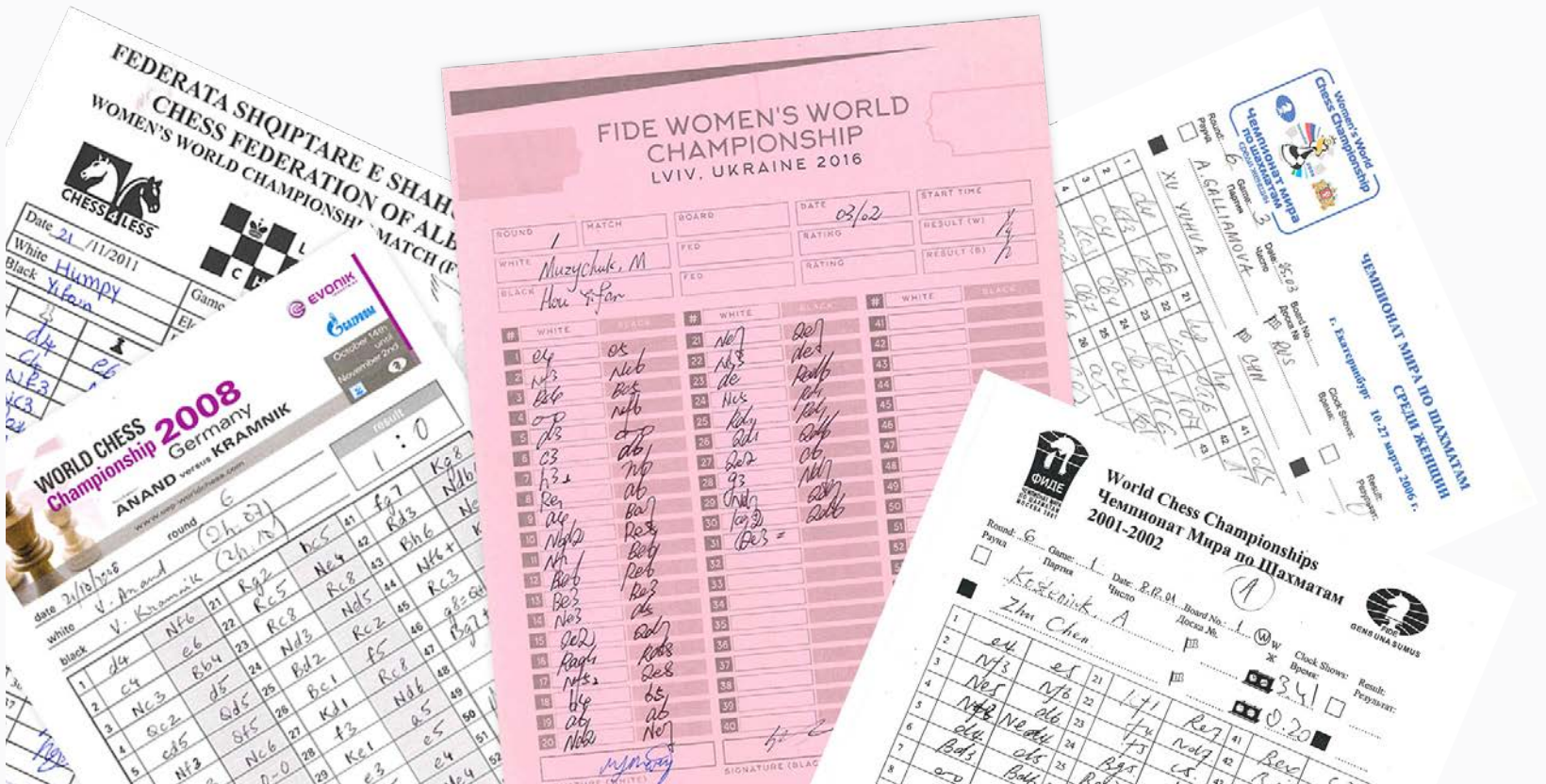


World Championship Program from the 2000 World Chess Championship, New Delhi, India, 2000, Collection of FIDE

### 2000 FIDE

FIDE continued with its 100-player knockout format, holding the first six rounds of the World Championship event in New Delhi and the last in Tehran. Viswanathan Anand, who had defeated Alexander Khalifman and Michael Adams earlier, dominated in the final beating Alexei Shirov 3½–½.

FIDE, Score Sheets from Various World Chess Championships and Women's World Chess Championships, 2001–2016, Collection of FIDE





## 2004

Antoaneta Stefanova defeated Ekaterina Kovalevskaya in the finals of the Women's World Championship held in Elista, Russia, by a score of  $2\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ . The following year, Bulgarian players possessed both championship titles when Veselin Topalov won the men's event. Defending champion Zhu Chen, pregnant during the competition, did not defend her title.

## 2006

Twenty-nine-year-old Xu Yuhua became China's third women's world champion when she defeated Alisa Galliamova in the finals of the 64-player knockout held in Yekaterinburg, Russia, by a score of  $2\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ . Xu Yuhua stopped playing not long after ascending the throne, playing her last FIDE-rated game in 2011.



Maker unknown, Alexandra Kosteniuk's Medal from the 2008 Women's World Chess Championship, Nalchik, Russia, 2008. Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

## 2008

Alexandra Kosteniuk accomplished what no other woman representing Russia has been able to do since the breakup of the Soviet Union. She won the Women's World Chess Championship, defeating 14-year-old Hou Yifan in the finals of the 64-player knockout held in Nalchik, Russia by the score of  $2\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$ .

## 2010

Hou Yifan of China became the youngest Women's World Champion by defeating fellow countrywoman Ruan Lufei in the finals of the 64-player knockout held in Hatay, Turkey, in a match that went down to the tiebreaker. Hou, who broke Maya Chiburdanidze's record as the youngest champion, would win another three titles.



Hektor Pustina, Hou Yifan Receiving Her Trophy at the 2011 World Women's World Chess Championship, Tirana, Albania, November 30, 2011. Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame. Courtesy of the Associated Press

## 2011

Tirana, Albania, hosted FIDE's return to a two-player match to decide the Women's World Championship. Hou Yifan, one of only three women to be rated in the top 100 players in the world (Judit Polgar and Maya Chiburdanidze are the others), defended her championship by defeating Koneru Humpy  $5\frac{1}{2}-2\frac{1}{2}$ .

## 2012

27-year-old Anna Ushenina of Ukraine became the Women's World Champion when she defeated former champion Antoaneta Stefanova of Bulgaria in the finals of the 64-player knockout held in Khanty Mansiysk, Russia. Ushenina was a member of the 2006 and 2022 gold medal-winning Ukrainian women's Olympiad teams.

## 2013

FIDE implemented a new policy of switching between two formats for Women's World Chess Championships, alternating two-player matches with knockout tournaments. Hou Yifan, who had been defeated in the second round of the knockout by Monica Socko of Poland the previous year, defeated Anna Ushenina  $5\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$  to win her third title.

## 2015

Ukraine gained a second women's world champion when Mariya Muzychuk defeated Natalia Pogonina of Russia  $2\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$  to win the finals of a 64-player knockout tournament held in Sochi, Russia. In 2015, Ukraine issued a postage stamp honoring Mariya and her older sister Anna.



katatonia82, Seventh Game of the Women's World Chess Championship Match Between Mariya Muzychuk and Hou Yifan, March 11, 2016. Courtesy of Bigstock

## 2016

Hou Yifan, who skipped the previous year's knockout championship, won her fourth title by defeating Mariya Muzychuk  $6-3$  in a match held in Lviv, Ukraine. This is the last time Hou, the second highest-rated woman ever at 2686 FIDE, has played in a Women's World Championship.



Stefan64, 2017 Women's World Chess Champion Tan Zhongyi, 2023, Public domain

## 2017

Tan Zhongyi became China's fifth champion defeating Anna Muzychuk in the final match of the 64-player knockout which went down to the tiebreak match.

## May 2018

Ju Wenjun became China's sixth women's world champion when she defeated the defending title holder, Tan Zhongyi  $5\frac{1}{2}-4\frac{1}{2}$  in a match that went down to the wire. The match was played in Shanghai and Chongqing.

## November 2018

No player, man or woman, had won two World Championships in a single year until Ju Wenjun. During the spring she became champion in a match and that fall won a 64-player knockout in Khanty Mansiysk, Russia, defeating Kateryna Lagno in the final decided in the tiebreak phase.

## 2020

Ju Wenjun won her third Women's World Championship by defeating Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia in a match divided between Shanghai and Vladivostok. Once again, the event went to the tiebreak stage. This match was also the seventh in a row in which the champion and challenger were from either China, Russia, or Ukraine.



Stev Bonihage, Ju Wenjun Receiving her Trophy for Winning the Women's World Chess Championship, 2023, Collection of FIDE

## 2023

Ju Wenjun and Lei Tingjie battled for the Women's World Championship in Shanghai and Chongqing. Ju Wenjun won her fourth title by a score of  $6\frac{1}{2}-5\frac{1}{2}$ .



Photographer unknown, **Ruslan Ponomarev, 2002 FIDE World Chess Champion, 2002**, Collection of FIDE

## 2002 FIDE

FIDE expanded the field and 128 players competed in a knockout tournament for the World Championship which was held in Moscow. 18-year-old Ruslan Ponomarev defeated fellow Ukrainian Vassily Ivanchuk for the title, becoming the youngest FIDE world champion, a record he still holds for a divided title (Kasparov holds the unified record).

## 2004 Dannemann

The Brain Games Network dissolved in 2003 so the Swiss cigar firm Dannemann organized the title match between defending champion Vladimir Kramnik and his challenger Peter Leko. The match came down to the wire when Kramnik tied the score and kept his title by winning the last game.

## 2004 FIDE

Ruslan Kazimdzhanov of Uzbekistan won the 128-player knockout held in Libya by defeating Michael Adams in the final match. Earlier in the event he defeated Alexander Crischuk and Veselin Topalov. 16-year-old Hikaru Nakamura made it to the fourth round of the competition before being knocked out by Adams.

## 2005 FIDE

Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria became the new FIDE world champion with his victory in an 8-player double round robin held in Argentina. The 30-year-old Topalov scored a tremendous 10 out of 14 against the elite field which included Judit Polgar, the only women ever to compete in such an event.



Mergen Bembinov, **Vladimir Kramnik vs. Veselin Topalov Came One of the 2006 World Chess Championship**, September 23, 2006, Courtesy of the Associated Press

## 2006

Veselin Topalov and Vladimir Kramnik competed in the reunification match, bringing together the two championship titles. After much controversy, Kramnik emerged the victor.

## 2007

Once again FIDE changed the format to determine the champion, replacing the traditional match with an eight-player double round. Held in Mexico City it produced a new title holder in Viswanathan Anand who scored 9 points from 14. Vladimir Kramnik and Boris Gelfand finished tied for second, a point behind.

## 2008

This match for the World Championship, held in Bonn, Germany, featured the reigning champion Viswanathan Anand and the former title holder Vladimir Kramnik. The two were evenly matched going in with nearly identical ratings, but Anand dominated winning three of the first six games and easily retained his title.



Photographer unknown, **Bulgaria's Prime Minister Boiko Borisov Presents Viswanathan Anand his Trophy for becoming the World Chess Champion**, May 13, 2010, Courtesy of the Associated Press

## 2010

Gata Kamsky won the World Cup, but instead of playing Anand for the title, faced Veselin Topalov. Topalov defeated him, but then lost to Anand.

## 2012

Moscow, which has hosted more World Championships than any other city, saw champion Viswanathan Anand and challenger Boris Gelfand battle it out. The score was deadlocked after 12 games, forcing the combatants to play a series of tiebreaker games at a faster time control with Anand eventually emerging triumphant.

## 2013

Viswanathan Anand was removed from his throne by a new challenger. 22-year-old Magnus Carlsen of Norway became the second youngest player (behind only Garry Kasparov) to become the undisputed champion of the world when he defeated Anand in Chennai, India, by a score of 6  $\frac{1}{2}$ –3  $\frac{1}{2}$ .



Pentagram for World Chess, **World Chess Championship, Sochi, Russia**, November 7-28, 2014, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

## 2014

Few predicted Viswanathan Anand would be Magnus Carlsen's next challenger but he confounded the critics by winning the Candidates Tournament earning the right to a rematch in Sochi, Russia. This time around the match was a bit closer but, in the end, Carlsen retained his title 6  $\frac{1}{2}$ –4  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

## 2016

Sergey Karjakin of Russia won the Candidates Tournament in the spring of 2016 earning the right to play Magnus Carlsen in New York City for the title. The match was closely contested with the players tied 6–6 at the end of regulation. Carlsen dominated the rapid play tiebreaker to retain his title.

## 2018

Fabiano Caruana won the 2018 Candidates earning the right to play for the World Championship, the fifth American player to do so. Held in London, one of the tightest matches in World Championship history saw neither player win a single game in regulation with Carlsen retaining the title in the tiebreaker stage.

## 2021

Dubai hosted the World Championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi. The match started with five draws, but then the champion won a 136-move game, the longest in World Championship history. This changed the momentum and Carlsen went on to win 7  $\frac{1}{2}$ –3  $\frac{1}{2}$ .



Stav Bonhage, **Ding Liren, Winner of the 2023 World Chess Championship, 2023**, Collection of FIDE

## 2023

Kazakhstan was the venue for the World Championship between Ian Nepomniachtchi and Ding Liren, a match with no defending champion as Magnus Carlsen declined to defend his title—only the second time this had happened. The challengers were tied at the end of regulation, and Ding Liren went on to win the tiebreaker.

# CLASH FOR THE CROWN: CELEBRATING CHESS CHAMPIONS

April 11, 2024-January 12, 2025

Curated by Emily Allred, Curator, World Chess Hall of Fame

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