

The background is a solid teal color. There are several abstract white shapes: a large one on the left, a smaller one at the top right, and a pointed one at the bottom right. A red shape is partially visible at the top right, overlapping the teal background.

WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP TIMELINE

1920s-1930s

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.

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.

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-Wolf took second place.

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.

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-Wolf.

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 $11\frac{1}{2}-4\frac{1}{2}$.

1930s

Aug 1937

Menchik continued her dominance in the sixth Women's World Championship held during the Stockholm Olympiad. She won the 26-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.

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



1940s-1950s

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.

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.

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.

ELIZAVETA 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

1960s–1970s

1962

21-year-old Nona Caprindashvili became the fifth women's world champion when she convincingly defeated Elisaveta 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 $8\frac{1}{2}$ – $4\frac{1}{2}$.

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 $8\frac{1}{2}$ – $7\frac{1}{2}$.

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.



NONA GAPRINDASHVILI

1980s–1990s

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.

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.

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 $8\frac{1}{2}-5\frac{1}{2}$.

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.

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.

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.

1-27 СЕПТЕМВРИ 1986 . СОФИЯ НДК "Л. ЖИВКОВА"

МАЧ ЗА СВЕТОВНО ПЪРВЕНСТВО – ЖЕНИ
ЧИБУРДЛИДЗЕ
АХМИЛОВСКА



1990s

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.

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.

1996

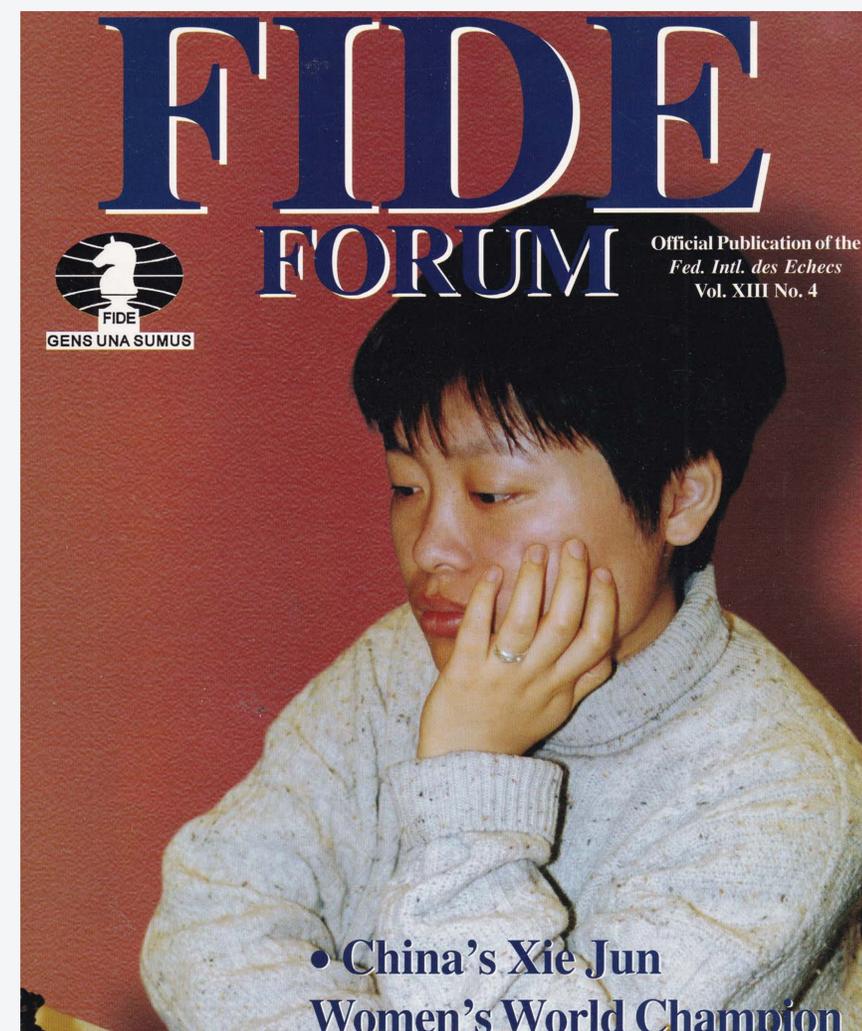
Just when it looked like Xie Jun's reign would continue for many years, she was decisively beaten by Susan Polgar in Jaén, Spain, by a score of $8\frac{1}{2}-4\frac{1}{2}$. Susan, the eldest of the three famous Hungarian chess-playing sisters, would never have a chance to defend her title.

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.

1999

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



SUSAN
POLGAR



Photographer unknown, **Susan Polgar Crowned Winner of the 1996 Womens World Chess Championship**, 1996, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, gift of Susan Polgar

2000s

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.

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.

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.

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 Championship, defeating 14-year-old Hou Yifan in the finals of the 64-player knockout held in Nalchik, Russia by the score of $2\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$.

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.



2010s

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.

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.

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 $5\frac{1}{2}-2\frac{1}{2}$.

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.

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.

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.

HOU YIFAN



MARIYA MUZYCHUK V. HOU YIFAN

2010s-2020s

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.

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.

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.

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 $6\frac{1}{2}-5\frac{1}{2}$.

Nov 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.



JU
WENJUN



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