

WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP TIMELINE

1880s-1890s

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 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.

1892

Steinitz once again retained his title, this time in an unexpectedly tough battle against the British master Isidor Gunsberg. 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 $10\frac{1}{2}-8\frac{1}{2}$.

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).

EMANUEL LASKER V. WILLIAM STEINITZ



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

1900s–1910s

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.



1920s–1930s

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.

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, $15\frac{1}{2}$ – $9\frac{1}{2}$.

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 $15\frac{1}{2}$ – $10\frac{1}{2}$.

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, $15\frac{1}{2}$ – $9\frac{1}{2}$.

JOSÉ RAÚL CAPABLANCA



ALEXANDER ALEKHINE

1940s-1950s

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.

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 Vasily 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.

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.

VASILY SMYSLOV V. MIKHAIL BOTVINNIK



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

1960s

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.

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.

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.



TopFoto: Mikhail Botvinnik and Tigran Petrosian at the World Chess Championship, Moscow, Russia, April 15, 1963. Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

BORIS SPASSKY



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

1970s

1972

Bobby Fischer became the eleventh world champion by defeating Boris Spassky 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ –8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in Reykjavík, 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.

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.

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.

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 $\frac{1}{2}$.



1980s

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.

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 $12\frac{1}{2}$ – $11\frac{1}{2}$. Half the match was held in Leningrad and half in London. The latter honored the centennial of Steinitz-Zukertort, the first World Championship.

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.

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.

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.



1990s

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.

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 $12\frac{1}{2}-8\frac{1}{2}$. The chess world would remain split until 2006.

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, $12\frac{1}{2}-7\frac{1}{2}$.

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 $10\frac{1}{2}-7\frac{1}{2}$.



ANATOLY KARPOV V. GARRY KASPAROV



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

1990s-2000s

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 $10 \frac{1}{2}-7 \frac{1}{2}$.

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 $8 \frac{1}{2}-6 \frac{1}{2}$. So great was Kramnik's domination that Kasparov did not win a single game in the match.

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.

2000 FIDE

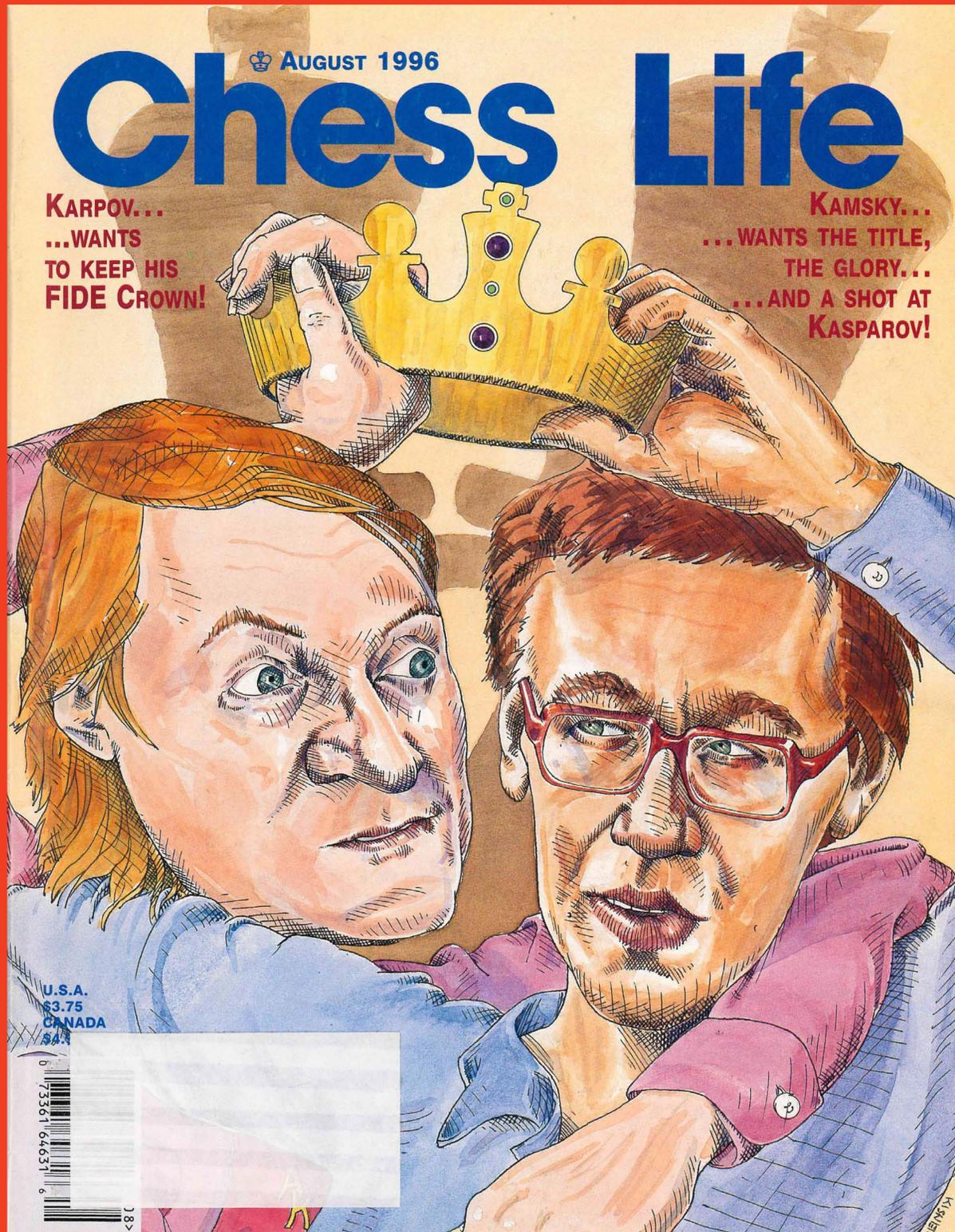
FIDE continued with its 100-player knockout format, holding the first six rounds of the World Championship event in New Delhi and the last in Tehran. Viswanathan Anand, who had defeated Alexander Khalifman and Michael Adama earlier, dominated in the final beating Alexei Shirov $3 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$.

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.

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 Ponomariov 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).



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



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

2000s

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.

2006

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

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 Grischuk and Veselin Topalov. 16-year-old Hikaru Nakamura made it to the fourth round of the competition before being knocked out by Adams.

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.

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.

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.



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

**VLADIMIR KRAMNIK
V. VESELIN TOPALOV**

2010s

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 $6\frac{1}{2}-3\frac{1}{2}$.

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.

VISWANATHAN ANAND



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



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

2020s

2021

Dubai hosted the World Championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Ian Nepomniacht. 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 $7\frac{1}{2}-3\frac{1}{2}$.

2023

Kazakhstan was the venue for the World Championship between Ian Nepomniacht 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.

