



HISTORY OF WOMEN'S CHESS IN THE U.S.

While chess was not immune to historic gender barriers, women players have long refused to concede the game to men. In fact, the history of chess in the U.S. dates back to the start of the 19th century for both sexes.

For the first few decades women were tacitly banned from traditional chess clubs and tournaments. So passionate female players established their own venues, with some success. An 1897 article in *The American Chess Magazine* stated: "Ladies' chess clubs are quite the fashion now."

Despite that observation, another 40 years would pass before the first U.S. Women's Chess Championship would be held in 1937. This was 80 years after the first official U.S. men's champion was crowned and 40 years after the first-ever international ladies tournament took place in London (where the U.S. had three representatives).

The first U.S. Women's Championship was held at the Rockefeller Center in New York City, organized by Caroline Marshall, the wife of U.S. Chess Champion Frank Marshall.

Since then the event has become a tradition with its own proud history.

Gisela Gresser, a 1992 Chess Hall of Fame inductee and one of the first American women to become a rated-master, has captured the title an unmatched nine times.

Grandmaster Susan Polgar, also a repeat title-holder, crossed the boundary and became the first woman to qualify for the Men's World Championship in 1986.

Also competing with the men was last year's U.S. women's chess champ, Anna Zatonskih. She participated in the male-dominated U.S. Championship back in May, also held at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis. She was joined by Irina Krush, who she faced in the finals of the 2008 Women's Championship.

Clearly women's chess has come a long way in the United States. Indeed, 2009 undoubtedly will offer an inspiring new chapter in the history and development of women's chess in America and around the world.

WOMEN'S CHESS IN THE U.S. FACTS

- The first unofficial U.S. women's champion was crowned in 1857. Though her name was never listed, a description of the chess queen secured her legacy: "This lady is believed to be the strongest amateur of her sex in the country, and would certainly be ranked as a first-rate in any club."
- The first published game by a U.S. woman player appeared in an 8-page brochure in 1830.
- A Texas man in 1885 publicly offered a \$100 bet that his wife could beat any man in chess.
- Mona May Karff won seven titles, topped only by Gisela Kahn Gresser's nine wins.
- Irina Krush holds the record as the youngest player to win the U.S. Women's Chess Championship. She won it in 1998 at age 14.
- In 1909 Eliza Foot "placed on the market a series of chess puzzles", making her the first U.S. female chess author.



TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS 1937 - 1986

- 1937 Adele Rivero
- 1938 Mona May Karff
- 1940 Adele Rivero
- 1941 Mona May Karff
- 1942 Mona May Karff
- 1944 Gisela Kahn Gresser
- 1946 Mona May Karff
- 1948 Gisela Kahn Gresser - Mona May Karff
- 1951 Mary Bain
- 1953 Mona May Karff
- 1955 Gisela Kahn Gresser - Nancy Roos
- 1957 Gisela Kahn Gresser - Sonja Graf
- 1959 Lisa Lane
- 1962 Gisela Kahn Gresser
- 1964 Sonja Graf
- 1965 Gisela Kahn Gresser
- 1966 Gisela Kahn Gresser - Lisa Lane
- 1967 Gisela Kahn Gresser
- 1969 Gisela Kahn Gresser
- 1972 Eva Aroson - Marilyn Koput
- 1974 Mona May Karff
- 1975 Diane Savereide
- 1976 Diane Savereide
- 1977 Diane Savereide - Rachel Crotto
- 1978 Diane Savereide - Rachel Crotto
- 1979 Rachel Crotto
- 1981 Diane Savereide
- 1984 Diane Savereide

TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS 1987 - 2008

- 1986 Inna Izrailov
- 1987 Anna Akhsharumova
- 1989 Alexey Root
- 1990 Elena Donaldson
- 1991 Esther Epstein - Irina Levitina
- 1992 Irina Levitina
- 1993 Elena Donaldson - Irina Levitina
- 1994 Elena Donaldson
- 1995 Anjelina Belakovskai - Sharon Burtman
- 1996 Anjelina Belakovskaia
- 1997 Esther Epstein
- 1998 Irina Krush
- 1999 Anjelina Belakovskaia
- 2000 Elina Groberman - Camilla Baginskaite
- 2001/02 Jennifer Shahade
- 2003 Anna Hahn
- 2004 Jennifer Shahade
- 2005 Rusa Goletiani
- 2006 Anna Zatonskih
- 2007 Irina Krush

DEFENDING CHAMPION

- 2008 Anna Zatonskih



2009 U.S. Women's Chess Championship to be Held October 3-13 at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis

ST. LOUIS, March 13, 2009 — The 2009 U.S. Women's Chess Championship will be held from October 3 through 13 at the sparkling, new Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis, which opened in July 2008.

The U.S. Women's Chess Championship dates back to 1937. The tournament is a 9-round event using the Round Robin pairing system, in which every player plays every other player and the highest score wins. Time controls will be the classical 40 moves in two hours, with the remaining moves in one hour. There will also be a 5-second increment per move.

Invitations will be sent to the top nine U.S. women players by ranking based on the August 2009 United States Chess Federation rating list. An invitation will also be sent to the defending champion, Olympic gold medalist Anna Zatonskih. The championship will have a purse of \$64,000, with \$15,000 awarded to the winner, the highest first prize in its history. In case of even scores, prize funds will be evenly divided between winners.

"We are delighted to have the opportunity to host this major event in the world of competitive chess," said Rex Sinquefield, a retired investment fund manager who founded the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis. "We are honored and most fortunate to serve as the official site in 2009 of two of the premier chess championships."

Steve Goldberg of the United States Chess Federation (USCF) Online calls the new St. Louis club "certainly one of the most impressive chess centers" in the country. While serving as host club for the U.S. Women's Chess Championship and the U.S. Chess Championship, Sinquefield notes that "it is the goal of the Chess Club to encourage all of St. Louis' young people to learn chess. We believe that bringing the best chess players in the country to our city will help achieve that goal."

The Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis is a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 organization that opened in July 2008. Founded by retired investment fund manager Rex Sinquefield, it already has more than 500 members, surpassing its original goal of 300 for its first year of operation. The club offers free classes for beginners, discounted tournament entry fees and discounted merchandise for club members. For more information, please visit www.saintlouischessclub.org or call 314-361-CHESS.

The United States Chess Federation is the official, not-for-profit U.S. membership organization for chess players and chess supporters of all ages and strengths, from beginners to grand masters. Founded in 1939 with the merger of the American Chess Federation and the National Chess Federation, USCF has grown to more than 80,000 members and nearly 1,200 affiliated chess clubs and organizations. USCF sanctions 25 national championship award titles to both amateurs and professionals, ranging from elementary school students to senior citizens. For more information, visit www.uschess.org.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

QUEENS OF JAZZ CONCERT

Friday, October 2, 2009

6 pm - 7 pm (VIP Reception)

7 pm - 8:30 pm (Denise Thimes)

8:30 pm - 10 pm (Ann Hampton Callaway)

Open to the Public: \$50 per person - \$100 VIP

Contemporary Art Museum

3750 Washington Boulevard, Saint Louis, MO 63108

OPENING DAY

Saturday, October 3, 2009

2 pm - 6 pm (Playing in the Dark: A Collision of Art & Chess)

7 pm - 8 pm (Ceremony & Reception)

Open to the Public: \$25 per person

Contemporary Art Museum

CHAMPIONSHIP ROUNDS

Open to the Public: \$12 CCSCSL membership

Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis

4657 Maryland Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63108

Sunday, October 4, 2009

Round 1

2 pm - 8 pm

Monday, October 5, 2009

Round 2

2 pm - 8 pm

Tuesday, October 6, 2009

Round 3

2 pm - 8 pm

Wednesday, October 7, 2009

Round 4

2 pm - 8 pm

Thursday, October 8, 2009

Round 5

2 pm - 8 pm

CHESS FOR LIFE KICK-OFF

Friday, October 9, 2009

8:30 am - 10 am (Breakfast & Speakers)

Open to the Public

Siteman Cancer Center (Lobby)

660 South Euclid Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63110

SCI-FEST

Friday, October 9, 2009

10:30 am - 11:30 am

Open to the Public

Saint Louis Science Center

5050 Oakland Avenue Saint Louis, MO 63110

SCHOLASTIC OUTREACH

Friday, October 9, 2009

1 pm - 5 pm

Open to the Public

Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis

King of Glory Elementary School

4293 Chippewa, Saint Louis, MO 63116

CHAMPIONSHIP ROUNDS

Open to the Public: \$12 CCSCSL membership

Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis

Saturday, October 10, 2009

Round 6

12 pm - 6 pm

Sunday, October 11, 2009

Round 7

12 pm - 6 pm

Monday, October 12, 2009

Round 8

12 pm - 6 pm

Tuesday, October 13, 2009

Round 9: FINAL

10 am - 6 pm

5 pm. - 7 pm (Possible Tie Breaker)

CLOSING CEREMONY

Friday, October 13, 2009

7 pm - 9 pm

Open to the Public: \$25 per person

Chase Park Plaza Hotel

212 N Kingshighway Boulevard, Saint Louis, Missouri 63108

A GAME OF CHANCE

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

6 pm - 8 pm (Champion vs. Special Guest)

Open to the Public

Kemper Art Museum

1 Brookings Drive, Saint Louis, MO 63130



 2009 U.S.

WOMEN'S

 CHAMPIONSHIP

 October 3-13, 2009

ANNA ZATONSKIH

Ranking - 1

Rating - 2496

Age - 31

Birthplace - Ukraine

Residence - Long Island, NY



Chess Highlights - Two-Time U.S. Women's Champion; Gold Individual Medal in 2008 Chess Olympiad

Anna is described in a U.S. Chess Federation biography as an intense competitor who has trouble sleeping at night during tournaments because she ponders the next day's games. That was a fact when it was written four years ago, but Anna says it's no longer true. She now has a 2-year-old daughter, Sofia, and motherhood has given her a completely different view of chess. She's still highly competitive, but it's nothing compared to trials and tribulations of raising a child. "I want to win, I want to achieve," she says. "Let's say I'm not so crazy about it now." Nonetheless, coached by her husband, German chess grandmaster Daniel Fridman, Anna comes into the tournament as a favorite.

Anna was one of only two women rated high enough to play in the U.S. Chess Championship back in May, but she says she actually feels more pressure for the Women's Championship. She is determined to defend her 2008 championship title. Anna says her chess highlights include the 2004 silver medal and the 2008 bronze she helped the U.S. team win at the Chess Olympiad.

Outside of the chess, Anna has a variety of interests from bicycling to ping pong to scuba diving. She even played an underwater match while in scuba gear on a giant board. The game couldn't go longer than 50 minutes and she played to a draw.

IRINA KRUSH

Ranking - 2

Rating - 2478

Age - 25

Birthplace - Ukraine

Residence - Brooklyn, NY



Chess Highlights - Two-Time U.S. Women's Champion (youngest winner ever at age 14); Member of 2004 Silver Medal U.S. Olympiad Team and 2008 Bronze Medal Team

Irina Krush looks forward to chess matches, but doesn't spend much time contemplating her chess success or failures. "I'm more attached to my future accomplishments." She says she enjoys the challenge of playing grandmasters most. "When you beat a strong GM, that's when you feel like you can play chess." She faced GM players in her first 8 matches in the U.S. Chess Championship this year, also held at CCSCSL. She finished 20th, with 3.5 points, including 3 points against the grandmasters.

While Irina has a degree in international relations from NYU, she is currently concentrating on chess. In 2008 she received a Samford Chess Fellowship, allowing her to pursue chess full-time. Eventually, she figures she will make a career out of chess by playing, teaching and writing about it. Becoming a top-flight chess player takes a lot of time.

But Irina is far from one-dimensional. On top of tennis, reading, writing and yoga, she has recently sunk herself deeply into rap music, striking up a friendship with one Saint Louis rapper. "It's a little bit unusual because people say, 'That's kind of a normal-looking girl, really straight-laced, and she likes rap music.' They hear me rap, they're really amazed."



 2009 U.S.

WOMEN'S

 CHAMPIONSHIP

 October 3-13, 2009

RUSUDAN GOLETIANI

Ranking - 3

Rating - 2437

Age - 27

Birthplace - Georgia

Residence - Hartsdale, NY



Chess Highlights - Soviet Union champion under age of 12; Georgian and Russian champion under 14; World Junior Champion under 14, 16, 18; U.S. women's champion, 2005

For about as long as Rusudan Goletiani has been playing chess, she has been among the elite players, and that includes the eight years she has spent in the United States. The winner of the 2005 U.S. Women's Chess Championship says she can't pick out one or two highlights that stand out. "Every accomplishment means a lot," she says, adding that her ultimate chess goal is to become a grandmaster.

Rusudan considers the late, great Russian grandmaster Alexander Alekhine as her biggest chess influence and adds that outside of chess she admires "every person that works hard to achieve his or her goal."

Outside of chess, Rusudan enjoys ping pong, reading and cooking. She is married with a 2-year-old daughter, Sophie, but Rusudan says she doesn't have much difficulty fitting the rigors of chess into her daily life. "I wish I had more time for everything, but somehow I manage it all," she says. Indeed, her most difficult challenge was moving – from her native country of Georgia to the New York when she was 19. "I did not have a family in New York, and did not know much English," she says.

SABINA FOISOR

Ranking - 4

Rating - 2390

Age - 20

Birthplace - Romania

Residence - Baltimore, MD



Chess Highlights - Multiple Romania Girls "Under Age" Champion; 2004 Multiple Romanian and European Champion in Blitz and Rapid; Top 20 at European Chess Championship in 2007, Qualified for the World Chess Championship

Sabina Foisor has been a chess dynamo since starting around age 4. While her parents have been her biggest chess influence, she says her favorite players are Gary Kasparov and the late Bobby Fischer. Like many players, she has traveled the globe playing in tournaments, but 2009 will be her first time in the U.S. Women's Chess Championship. Her main goal in chess is to become one of the top 20 women players in the world.

When not playing or training for chess, she likes to travel, read books, watch movies and hang out with friends. "Of course I can manage to balance chess with other things," she says. She has many heroes outside of chess, including her family, Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton and Sigmund Freud. After listing those four she added, "I will stop here because the list would be too large."

One of her biggest challenges was moving to the U.S. to study at University of Maryland at Baltimore County, which has a strong chess program. Indeed, UMBC won the 2009 U.S. national collegiate title. At UMBC Foisor studies psychology, modern language and linguistics.



 2009 U.S.

WOMEN'S

 CHAMPIONSHIP

 October 3-13, 2009

CAMILLA BAGINSKAITE

Ranking - 5

Rating - 2356

Age - 42

Birthplace - Lithuania

Residence - Sioux Falls, SD



Chess Highlights – 1987 World Under 20 Champion; 2000 U.S. Women's Chess Champion; Six Chess Olympiads

In a tournament dominated by players in their late teens and early 20s, Camilla Baginskaite, 42, stands out. She says there's a "very simple" explanation for the relatively few peers her age in the top ranks: "They don't have time for that." She calls her own time for practice "uneven," adding, "Sometimes I don't practice at all." The rigors of chess also can take a toll on more seasoned players. "Chess is more sporty than people realize," she says. "It requires a lot of energy."

These days, Camilla's energies go largely toward her family. She is married to grandmaster Alex Yermolinsky, and has two children. Camilla has a master's degree in art history and is studying to become an art teacher.

She is blunt when asked how she balances chess and the rest of her life: "There is no such thing as a good balance. You either do chess professionally or not." But Camilla quickly adds that she's not giving up on winning another championship, and vows to become a more aggressive player. Camilla is not about to let age get in the way of continuing to be a top player. She's hopeful that 10 to 15 years from now, her name will still be on the list of U.S. Women's Chess Championship invitees. "When the kids are out of the house," Camilla figures, she will have more time to devote to chess.

TATEV ABRAHAMYAN

Ranking - 6

Rating - 2334

Age - 23

Birthplace - Armenia

Residence - Glendale, CA



Chess Highlights - 2004 U.S. Women's Chess Championship Runner-Up; 2008 and 2005 U.S. Women's Chess Championship Third Place; 2006 Pan-Am U18 (perfect score)

Tatev Abrahamyan started playing chess at 8 years old after her father took her to the Chess Olympiad games in 1996. There she met grandmaster Judit Polgar, arguably the greatest woman player of all time and the only woman in the tournament. "I was in complete awe," Tatev says. "My first thought was, 'I want to be just like her.'" She was soon playing competitively among the top players her age in Europe and has played in the U.S. Women's Chess Championship five times.

But becoming a top chess player has not been easy. "The main problem is balancing school with chess. Even though college is the No. 1 priority for me, I usually take time off to play in major events, like this one." When she is not studying or playing chess, she likes to read, play tennis, travel, watch movies and hang out with friends. And she also "unfortunately" has joined the poker-playing craze.

Another big challenge for Tatev was moving to the U.S. In fact, she says, "It was the biggest change in my life and it happened in a very short period of time. Everything in my life changed in a matter of few months. I had to give up everything I knew and start a new life. Even though I have lived here for some time now, it was a very big adjustment and I think a continuous one. "


 2009 U.S.
WOMEN'S
 CHAMPIONSHIP
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ALISA MELEKHINA

Ranking - 8

Rating - 2301

Age - 18

Birthplace - Ukraine

Residence - Philadelphia, PA



Chess Highlights - Represented the U.S. in Eight Consecutive World Youth Tournaments and Three Pan-American; Youngest Participant in 2007 U.S. Women's Chess Championship

Alisa Melekhina was the youngest player in the U.S. Women's Chess Championship two years ago, and is still the youngest today. That's what you might expect from someone who started playing at age 5 and entered her first tournament at age 7. In less than three years, she was winning prestigious international tournaments.

Alisa has already earned an International Master norm, which she considers her top chess accomplishment so far, but her ultimate goal is to become a grandmaster.

Alisa learned chess from her father, who was her first coach and remains a strong influence today.

Outside of chess, she is a ballerina, having studied it for 12 years. But Alisa knows where her priorities lie: squarely with chess. "I try to maintain a flexible schedule, but chess always takes precedence, though I will have to concentrate more on school now that I am in college," she said. A sophomore at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Alisa is studying philosophy.

IRYNA ZENYUK

Ranking - 9

Rating - 2281

Age - 23

Birthplace - Ukraine

Residence - Pittsburgh, PA



Chess Highlights - First Woman to Win Jerry Simon Memorial (2006); 2007 MVP of NY Knights Chess Team and Best 4th Board; 2450 Rating in 2008 Berkeley International

Iryna Zenyuk has two huge goals in life: To be a chess champion and to help the environment. She has a good start on her chess goal, ranking as one of the top 10 women players in the U.S. And she is active with her second goal too, currently pursuing a master's and eventually a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering at Carnegie Mellon University. She plans to use the degree to develop ways to make renewable energy more prevalent. Iryna defines her interests this way: Chess is her love, it's fun. But mechanical engineering will give her the means to give back to society.

Used to overcoming long odds and adversity, Iryna will undoubtedly fight hard for her passions. Iryna's father died when she was 8 and her mother moved to the U.S., leaving her and her brother in the Ukraine alone until Iryna could join her 6 years later. "It taught me to be independent," she says without a trace of bitterness.

Other interests have a big impact on Iryna's life too. Although only 5 feet 4, she was able to play volleyball in college. And these days dancing, particularly Latin and cha-cha, has become a main pursuit. Furthermore, she is friends with many of her chess competitors. "I have a lot of chess friends. We do the normal stuff: hang out, go to restaurants. ...I don't call myself solitary."



 2009 U.S.

WOMEN'S

 CHAMPIONSHIP

 October 3-13, 2009

YUN FAN

Ranking - 13

Rating - 2201

Age - 19

Birthplace – China

Residence – Greencastle, Ind.



Chess Highlights – Chinese National Master; Seven Time Member of the Chinese National Youth Chess Team

If Yun Fan were back in China, she probably would be a professional chess player. But for Yun, the music industry beckons even louder. “I play chess for fun,” she says. “My real ambition is music.” Yun readily acknowledges that she spends very little time playing chess because she would rather concentrate on music. She writes lyrics and music for a rock band in which she also sings. She’s also a band manager. In addition, she has a company where she brings American bands to China and Chinese bands to the U.S.

So it’s no surprise to learn that Yun is far more likely to practice her music than her chess. “Before I came to America (a year ago), I was in the national youth camp. I had to practice (chess) two hours every day because that’s required. Since I came to America, I don’t practice at all. I just go to tournaments and play.”

Yun also is busying studying as well. The sophomore at DePauw University in Greencastle, Ind., is a double major in economics and communications.

Yun credits chess for allowing her to travel around the globe and meeting many interesting people. But one place she likely won’t travel next summer is back to her home in Beijing. “Probably I will go to New York,” she says. “There are a lot of musicians to play and hang out with.”

BATTSETSEG TSAGAAN

Ranking - 11

Rating - 2265

Age - 37

Birthplace - Mongolia

Residence - Ellicott City, MD



Chess Highlights - Seven-Time Women’s Mongolian Chess Champion; Alumnus the Pan-American Intercollegiate Championship for University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Battsetseg Tsagaan has the dream of many elite chess players: She wants to become a grandmaster. In pursuit of that, she has racked up an impressive string of tournament successes that have made her a household name in her native Mongolia.

But it’s not so easy these days. She’s kept busy as a wife and mother to two children. She says balancing chess with the rest of her life is the most difficult challenge she faces.

“I have spent more and more time away from the board. Between work and family, it is tough to practice and play and play in chess tournaments,” she says.

Chess runs in Battsetseg’s blood. A player since she was 4, she says her biggest influence in chess is her father. She counts her second place finish in the 1992 World Collegiate Championship as the accomplishment that means the most to her.

To understand her passion for the game, check out J.C. Hallman’s, “The Chess Artist: Genius, Obsession, and the World’s Oldest Game.” Chapter 11 is entitled, “The Queen of Mongolia.” Yes, the chapter title refers to Battsetseg. It’s a fascinating read.



OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In its first year, the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis hosted undoubtedly the most successful U.S. Chess Championship in history. The prestigious 164 year-old tournament took place over 10 days in May and boasted more than \$130,000 in prize money. The Club's website attracted people from 168 countries who watched games live, kept up with the latest news and listened to analysis from experts.

CCSCSL also earned the honor of hosting the 2009 U.S. Women's Championship, held October 3 - 13 and consisting of 10 of the country's most elite female players.



Though these national championships were major highlights, CCSCSL has been busy throughout the year fulfilling its ambitious mission. It has hosted over 120 other tournaments, with about 70 more already on the schedule for the year.

On the scholastic side, CCSCSL has

arranged over 60 classes and that number is scheduled to double by the close of 2009. The number of special events, including guest speakers and simuls, is also expected to double to a total of 20 for the year.



Another very significant accomplishment is the implementation of chess in 30-plus classrooms in 2009! That means more kids are reaping the many rewards that the game has to offer.

All of this has translated into a remarkable boost in membership. Since the doors opened, 928 chess enthusiasts have signed up as members, blowing all predictions and goals out of the water.

CCSCSL also has remained active in the community, hosting and participating in several events at local venues, including The Muny, high school football games and The Science Center. And it has partnered with organizations such as UrbanFurture and the Children's Education Alliance of Missouri.

Finally, the U.S. Chess Federation recently named St. Louis "Chess City of the Year!" And awarded "Organizer of the Year" to CCSCSL Executive Director Tony Rich and presented the national Koltanowski Award to CCSCSL founder, Rex Sinquefield.

OUR MISSION

CCSCSL is the most beautiful and technologically advanced chess club in the nation. It is a destination for chess players, both beginning and advanced, to enjoy a game of skill more than 1,500 years old.



OUR GOALS

Our goals are to elevate the game of chess throughout the Saint Louis community and to introduce chess to thousands of Saint Louis' children and adults. Recognizing the cognitive and behavioral benefits of chess, CCSCSL is committed to supporting those chess programs that already exist in area schools, while encouraging the development of new programs within regular school curricula.