

# European Chess Queens in Fighting Mood

Antoneta Stefanova becomes 10<sup>th</sup> World Champion

Alexandra Kosteniuk wins 5<sup>th</sup> European title

By Harald Fietz

**Women's chess has come a long way. In the past a strong female player might have a 2100 or 2200 rating. Not only are ratings higher these days, but there are more events for women to play in, and many very talented younger players who can play some mean combinations. Our European correspondent, Harald Fietz, reports on two recent and important chess events: The European Women's Championship in Dresden and the Women's World Championship held in Elista.**

All photos for this article were provided through the generosity of Harald Fietz who has taken a break from his work as a photojournalist on page 10.

After Linares 2004, the chess world was suffering from the 'draw disease.' Three weeks later, between March 21<sup>st</sup> and April 4<sup>th</sup>, the European women's championship revealed a completely different picture of the state of players' minds. A 12-round Swiss system with 108 players (ranging from Elo 2488 to 1800) produced 647 entertaining games, of which only 25% ended in a draw!



Alexandra Kosteniuk

A few weeks later, in Elista, between May 21<sup>st</sup> and June 8<sup>th</sup>, the European chess queens proved their strength. Bulgarian Antoneta Stefanova and Russian Ekaterina Kovalevskaya fought for the crown in the final of the 64-player knockout world championship. 14 of the last 16 players were from Europe. What has happened to the recent dominance of Asian players in world women's chess? Where are America's new hopes?

Admittedly, some world class players were absent: former world cham-

pions Xie Jun (1991-96 and 1999-2001) and Zhu Chen (2001-04) from China as well as new American resident Szusza Polgar (1996-99) did not participate for various private reasons. Nevertheless, it looks as if European women's chess has gained new strength due to the combative chess of three groups of players:

1. the 'old guard,' who have been part of international top chess for more than 15-20 years (e.g., Chiburdanize, Galliamova, Cramling, Kachiani-Gersinska, Arakhamia-Grant, Matveeva, Foisor, and Bojkovic);
2. the 'post-USSR' forces, who received their chess education before 1991 but rose to top level in the late 1990s (e.g., Stefanova, Kovalevskaya, Zhukova, Skripchenko, Gaponenko, Pevtan, Danielian, Socko, Zielinska, Khurtsidze, and Houska);
3. the 'new kids,' who joined the scene in the new millennium (e.g., Kosteniuk, Dzagnidze, Lahno, the Kosintseva sisters, Cmilyte, Zimina, Radziejewicz, Sebag, Jackova, and Pähtz).

Against this background, a look at games and stories from these two prestigious championships not only aims to provide insight into the dramas at the board but also hopes to give some biographical background, and to ex-

plain the part played by geography.

### Reliable Top

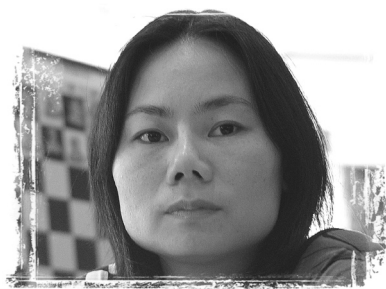
In April 2004, FIDE's top 50 players' list ascertained 37 players from Europe, 11 from Asia, and 2 from America. From the group of 37 players, 21 participated in the European championship and 21 used their qualification for the world championship. If we zoom in to the top 20 figures (14 from Europe and 6 from Asia), 6 Europeans took part in the continental championship and 10 came to the world championship. The results reveal that according to the categories outlined above, the top 14 in Dresden break down as follows: 4 from group 1, 6 from group 2 and 4 from group 3.



*Natalia Zhukova*

The final standing was Alexandra Kosteniuk (RUS), and Zhaquin Peng (NED) both with 9½ points. Stefanova (BUL), Natalia Zhukova (UKR), Nana Dzagnidze (GEO), Irina Slavina (RUS) all had 8½ pts. Cristina Adela Foisor, (ROM), Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant (GEO), Pia Cramling (SWE), Monika Socko (POL), Tatiana Kosintseva (RUS), Jovanka Houska (ENG), Olga Zimina (RUS), and Nino Khurtsidze (GEO) all had 8 pts. All of these—except Zimina and Khurtsidze who lost play-offs—qualified for the next world championships (somewhere, sometime).

In Elista, the pattern among the 14 Europeans among the last 16 was more



*Zhaquin Peng*

in favor of the third category (born in the 1980s): Peng, Maja Chiburdanize (GEO), Ketino Kachiani-Gersinska (GER), and Natasa Bojkoic (SCG) are from group 1. Stefanova, Zhukova, Kovalevskaya (RUS), Maja Lomineishvili (GEO) were from group 2, and T. Kosintseva, Dzagnidze, Elisabeth Pähtz (GER), Viktorija Cmilyte (LTU), Kateryna Lahno (UKR), Jana Jackova (CZE) are from group 3. However, Stefanova and Kovalevskaya reached the final. This might indicate that the knockout format better suits the younger players (in addition, 17 year old semi-finalist Humpy Koneru from India beat 28-year old Yuhua Xu from China in the quarter final, in the duel of those two non-Europeans who survived round two). But, finally the experience of those born in the 1970s paid off. The established pyramid, with the reliable top from groups one and two remains the foundation of women's chess in Europe, but some players from the youngest age group have already started to burst in (e.g., Kosteniuk as vice-world champion in 2001, Shirov's wife Cmilyte as European vice-champion in 2003, or T. Kosintseva as European bronze medallist in 2003).

In Dresden, the 12-round race was fought out by Kosteniuk and Peng. Chinese-born Peng, who moved to the Netherlands in 1995, had the sole lead until round eight. Then the Russian, who last year finished her studies in

sports science and married her manager Diego Garcés, caught up.

In the final round, Peng did not have too many problems in beating the Romanian Foisor, and the Muscovite had to crack a hard nut in her compatriot Tatiana Kosintseva. A bitter fight ensued, as victory would have given the shooting star from Archangelsk the silver medal (without needing a play-off for the world championship ticket).

As in the world championship, the European event was played under FIDE's time controls (90 minutes for 36 moves + 30 second increments), and in this final round the faster time limit proved to be the decisive factor—although during the Dresden event both players displayed their superior abilities in time trouble on more than one occasion.



*Tatiana Kosintseva*

**Kosintseva, T (2447)–  
Kosteniuk, A (2469)  
[B53], Dresden**

European Women's Championship 2004

**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 d6 4. Bb5 Bd7 5. Bxc6 Bxc6 6. d4 cxd4 7. Qxd4 Nf6 8. Bg5 e6 9. 0–0–0 Be7 10. Qd3 Qa5 11. h4 a6 12. Nd4 Rc8 13. f4 0–0 14. f5 Rfe8 15. Rhf1 h6 16. fxe6! fxe6.**

16... hxc5 17. exf7† Kxf7 18. Rf5 Qc7 19. Nxc6 Qxc6 20. hxc5 is good for White.

**17. e5!**







*Ekatarina Kovalevskaya*

## 27. Nf6† Kg7.

Again, Borik suggested a Queen sacrifice: 27... Qxf6 28. gxf6 Bxc2 29. Qg5 Kg8 30. Rbc1 Bxd3 and there is no way to stop the advance of the a-pawn.

28. Nxb5† gxb5 29. cxb3 a4 30. bxa4 Rxa4 31. Kh1 Ra2 32. Rg1 Re2 33. Bf2 Ra8 34. f4 exf4 35. Qxf4 Raa2 36. Rg2 Kg6 37. Qf3 Rac2 38. Rf1 b3 39. e5 Bxe5 40. d4 Bg7 41. Bg1 Rxb2 42. Qd3† Kxb5 43. Be3† Kh4 44. Rf4† Rg4 45. d5 Rc1† 46. Bxc1 Qe1† 47. Rf1 Qe4† 48. Qxe4 Rxe4 49. Kg2 b2 50. Bf4 Rb4 51. Bg3† Kg5 52. h4† Kg6 53. Rb1 Ra4 0-1.

## New Eastern faces

Geography has to be emphasized as a key factor in most successes by European chess women. This applies not only to the current champions but is also the case with respect to the 'new kids.' Whereas nowadays chess girls in western Europe (i.e., the 15 member

states of the European Union before enlargement in May 2004) only sporadically manage to take up a career as a professional player, it is still a different case in countries of the former Eastern bloc. There are currently four major women's chess countries (with players in the top 53—five players with Elo 2402 in the July list): Russia (11 players), Ukraine (4 players), Georgia (4 players) and Poland (4 players).

In the top 20 ranks of the girls' list (20 years old and younger), there are 6 Russians, 4 Ukrainians, 1 Georgian and 1 Romanian (plus one player each from France and Germany).

A dozen girls from eastern Europe show that the chess educational system is still more or less effectively in place. A total of 35 out of 53 players from eastern Europe makes it clear that most of them can make a living from chess. Although many international women's tournaments had disappeared during the 1990s, prize money in hard currency (women's prizes at open tournaments and payments in national leagues) often secures an income that proves to be beyond the national average. Therefore it is not surprising that those born in the 1980s and 1990s believe in the professional chess life.

The most promising among them are: Dzagnidze (17 years—Elo 2476), Lahno (14 years—2472), the Kosintseva sisters (Tatiana 18 years—2462 and Nadezhda 19 years—2415), Natalija Pogonina (Russia, 19 years old—2402), and Anna Muzychuk (Ukraine, 14 years—2378). Whereas Lahno already had some international stardom, the others only recently appeared upon the international scene.

The latest Russian women's superfinal (June 28<sup>th</sup> to July 11<sup>th</sup>) highlighted this change. Tatiana Kosintseva won (8½/11 games) ahead of Kosteniuk (8 pts.—still no. 1 in the girls' list!) and Nadezhda Kosintseva (6½ pts.). Long-serving players like Kovalevskaya and Galliamova finished at the 6 point mark, which means that the first three, and Kovalevskaya, as vice world champion will play in the Olympiad team. Whereas Pogonina mainly raised her rating at national events, Dzagnidze had already shown her talent at international women's events (cf. ECC report in *SQUARES* Fall 2003, p. 9). The future player for defending team champion Baden-Oos in the German women's Bundesliga has raised her rating by exactly 100 points since April 2003. The following game against Stefanova gives an example of her solid style (combined with an aggressive search to seize the initiative).

## Dzagnidze, N (2452)— Stefanova, A (2490)

[D15], Elista

Women's World Championship 2004

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nc3 a6 5. a4 e6 6. Bg5 a5 7. e3 Na6 8. Be2 Be7 9. 0-0 Nb4 10. Ne5 0-0 11. f4.

A novelty in a theoretically important position. Three alternatives have already been on the agenda:

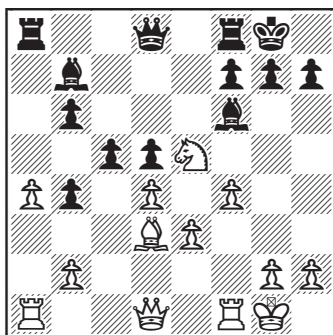
A) 11. Bf3 Nd7 12. Bxe7 Qxe7 13. Nxd7 Bxd7 14. Qe2 Rfd8 15. Rad1 Rac8 with an equal game in *Krush—Mirzoev, St. Petersburg 2000*.

B) 11. Qb3 Nd7 12. Bxe7 Qxe7 13. Nd3 dxc4 14. Qxc4 e5 15. Nxb4 Qxb4 16. Rfd1 exd4 17. Rxd4 Qxb2 18. Rb1 Qa3 19. Ne4 and White had enough compensation in *Kramnik—Bacrot*,

Paris (rapid) 2002.

C) 11. Na2 Nd7 12. Bxe7 Qxe7 13. Nxb4 Qxb4 14. Qc2 Nxe5 15. dxe5 Qc5 16. Rfd1 b6 17. Rac1 Ba6 18. Bd3 h6 19. cxd5 Qxc2 20. Rxc2 Bxd3 21. Rxd3 cxd5 22. Kf1 Rfc8 23. Rdc3 and White dominated in *Bacrot–Kristjansson*, Reykjavik 2003.

11... b6 12. Na2 Bb7 13. Nxb4 axb4 14. Bxf6 Bxf6 15. cxd5 exd5 16. Bd3 c5.



## 17. Qc2

The materialist's alternative might provide some opportunities for counterplay as White loses control over a6—which opens the Rook a path to the kingside. 17. dxc5 bxc5 18. Qc2 Bxe5 19. fxe5 Qe7 (19... c4 20. Bxh7† Kh8 21. Bf5 Ra6) 20. Bxh7† Kh8 21. Bf5 Ra6.

17... g6 18. Bb5 Bxe5?

Black should keep his dark-square Bishop and play ...Rc8 or ...Qe7 instead.

19. fxe5 Qg5 20. Rf3 Rac8 21. Qf2 cxd4 22. exd4 Rc1† 23. Rxc1 Qxc1† 24. Qf1 Rc8 25. Qxc1 Rxc1† 26. Rf1 Rc2 27. Rf6 Bc8 28. Rxb6 Be6 29. b3 Rc3 30. a5 Rxb3 31. Ba4 Ra3 32. Rxb4 Bc8 33. Bc6 Kg7 34. Ra4 Rc3 35. Bxd5 Ba6 36. Bf3 Rc2 37. d5 Kf8 38. Rb4 h5 39. Rb6 Be2 40. d6 Bxf3 41. Rb8† Kg7 42. gxf3. 1–0.

Another fast-developing talent



Nana Dzagnidze waiting for the action to begin. Note the “Schach Silver” digital chess clock to her left—a staple Chessco inventory item.

comes from the town of Stryi in the Lviv region of the Ukraine. Anna Muzychuk also made an impressive step forward in the FIDE rating list—since April 2003 she has gained 122 points to reach 2378 in July 2004. Although she lost 9 points in this year's second quarter, she is quite capable of meeting any woman grandmaster without respect for big names. In Dresden she kept down her tough-to-beat compatriot Natalia Zhukova, who in 1999 was the first European women's champion. In 2003 Muzychuk had already won the Ukrainian Women's Championship.

Muzychuk, A (2367)–  
Zhukova, N (2462)  
[C01], Dresden

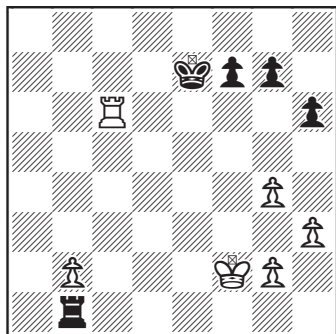
European Women's Championship 2004  
1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. exd5 exd5 4. Nf3 Bd6 5. h3 Nc6 6. Be2 Nge7 7. 0–0 Bf5 8. c4.

A new concept that resembles ideas in the Panov attack. In the Hungarian championship of 1999, Varga–Farago played only one more move and agreed to a draw: 8. Re1.

8... dxc4 9. Bxc4 0–0 10. Nc3 Bg6 11. Bg5 h6 12. Bh4 Qd7 13. d5! Ne5?! 14. Nxe5 Bxe5 15. Re1 Nf5 16. Rxe5 Nxh4 17. Qe2 a6 18. Re1 Nf5 19. Bd3 Nd4 20. Qd1 Bxd3 21. Qxd3 Nc6 22. R5e3 Na7 23. Re7 Qd6 24. Qg3! Qxg3 25. fxg3 Rac8 26. R1e4 Nb5

Or 26... f6. Idea ...Rf7. 27. Rb4 b6 28. Ra4 a5 29. a3 Rf7 30. Rxf7 Kxf7 31. b4 which also favors White. 27. Nxb5 axb5 28. Rb4 Rfd8 29. Rxb5 Kf8 30. Re3 b6 31. Rc3 Rd6 32. a4 Ke7 33. a5 Kd7 34. axb6 cxb6 35. Kf2 Ra8 36. g4 Ra1 37. Rf3 Ke7 38. Rfb3 Rd1 39. Rxb6 Rxb6 40. Rxb6 Rxd5 41. Ke3 Rd1 42. Rc6 Re1† 43. Kf2 Rb1





Dvoretzky notes in his *Endgame Manual* that “the stronger side is almost always successful in practical endings.”

44. Rc2 Ke6 45. Ke3 Kd5 46. Rf2 f6 47. Kf4 g6 48. Rd2† Ke6 49. Ke4 Rf1 50. Kd4 Kd6 51. Kc4† Kc6 52. Kb4 f5 53. gxf5 Rxf5 54. Re2 Rf6 55. Ka5 Rf5† 56. Ka6 Kc5 57. Re4 Rf2 58. b4† Kd5 59. Rg4 Rf6† 60. Kb5 g5 61. Rg3 Kd4 62. Rg4† Kd5 63. h4 gxf5 64. Rxh4 Rg6 65. Rh5† Kd6 66. Kb6 Kd7† 67. Kb7 Rxg2 68. Rxh6 Rb2 69. Rh4 Rb1 70. Rc4 Kd6 71. Kb6 Kd5 72. Rc5† Kd6 73. b5 Ra1 74. Rc2 Kd7 75. Kb7 Ra3 76. b6 Ra1 77. Rd2† Ke7 78. Rd4 1–0.

## Western European Hopes

As the socio-economic situation is different in western Europe, there is a manageable number of top players: Pia Cramling from Sweden (no. 9–2489 Elo) who now lives with her husband Juan Manuel Bellon and her two year old daughter in Spain; Almira Skripchenko, from France (no. 21–2453), Moldavian born, ex-wife of GM Joel Lautier; Ketino Kachiani Gersinska (no. 26–2441) born in Georgia, mother of two boys (ages nine years and eight months respectively in May 2004 at the time of the world championship tournament) and wife of Jürgen Gersinska, president of Germany's top club Baden-Oos; Zhao-

quin Peng (no. 36–2418), former world champion candidate, divorced, mother of a four year old son; Marie Sebag (no. 41–2414), a 17-year old schoolgirl from France; and Eva Moser (no. 46–2406), a 22-year old student of business management, and part-time writer for the Austrian magazine *Schach-Aktiv*. Chess for these women means striking a reasonable balance between family life and school or university.

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With Sebag the only U20 western European player having a rating above 2400, there is only one (!) other woman player who fulfills all the categories (western Europe, U20 and rating above 2300): Elisabeth Pähtz, with a rating of 2396. So far the career high point for the U18 world champion of 2002 was her 2419 in October 2003. But, Pähtz' upbringing has been exceptional to



### France's Marie Sebag, U20

some extent as her father Thomas Pähitz is an experienced grandmaster and trainer and she herself seized the chance to transfer to the Dresden sports high school which has established chess as a regular school subject in 2002. This will enable the 19-year old to graduate from high school in four years instead of two, by combining school attendance with free periods for tournaments. In 2005 she will leave school and then will have to decide whether to try chess as a profession. In both world championships (2001 in Moscow and 2004 in Elista) she advanced to the final sixteen. In Dresden 2004, she was within reach of the top ten, but lost to Stefanova in the final round after she beat Elina Danielian from Armenia, a member of the reigning European women's championship team, with her tactical Wild West style in the penultimate round.

**Pähtz, E (2399)–  
Danielian, E (2428)**  
[C11], Dresden

European Women's Championship 2004

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5  
Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. Nf3 Nc6 7. Be3 a6 8.  
Qd2 b5 9. a3 Qb6 10. Rd1 c4 11. f5  
b4?! 12. axb4 Bxb4 13. Bxc4 dxc4  
14. d5 Nc5 15. dxc6 0–0 16. f6 gxf6  
17. exf6 Kh8 18. Bxc5 Bxc5 19. Qh6  
Rg8 20. Ng5.

A computer would play the accurate 20. Ne5 announcing a mate in seven moves: 20... Qc7 21. Rd8 Qxe5† 22. Ne2 Bf8 23. Rxf8 and Black can only give a few more checks.

**20... Rxg5 21. Qxg5 Bf8 22. Na4 Qc7 23. 0-0 e5 24. Rfe1 Be6 25. Rxe5 Qxc6 26. Nc5 h6 27. Qe3 Bg4 28. Rd4 Rc8 29. h3 Bd1 30. Nd7. 1-0.**

As in the *Muzychuk–Zhukova* game, there were many unexpected outcomes during the European championship. One such surprise was Anne Czäczine, one of only two German U18 players with an Elo above 2150 (the other is Ukrainian-born 14-year old Evgenija Shmirina who moved to Dresden in 2000 and who, like Pähtz, attends the sports high school there). Against the experienced Foisor, Czäczine, who shortly after the championship, graduated from high school with A+ marks and is going on to study medicine. She showed a good understanding of the middlegame and fighting spirit in the endgame. It is no wonder that in Dresden both she and Shmirina gained the women's IM title, and Pähtz achieved the final norm for the male IM title.



Germany's Anne Czäczine will study medicine

All three are members of Miroslav Shvarts' training group. Ukrainian born, and at one time the youngest pupil in the famous Botvinnik school of 1984, Shvarts moved to Germany in 2000. The former coach for the federal State of Saxony became chess president of the regional chess association in March 2004!

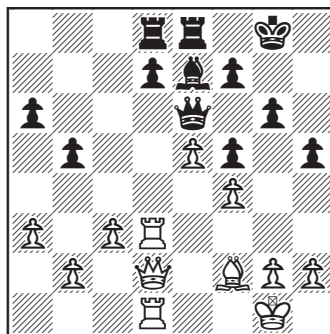
**Czäczine, A (2153)–  
Foisor, C (2404)**  
[B28], Dresden

European Women's Championship 2004  
*Analysis by Anne Czäczine*

**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 a6 3. Nc3 b5 4. d4 e6 5. Be3 cxd4 6. Nxd4 Bb7 7. Bd3 Nf6 8. e5 Nd5 9. Nxd5 Bxd5 10. 0–0 Nc6 11. f4 Qc7 12. c3 Qb7 13. Rf2 h5 14. Be2 g6 15. Bf3 Ne7 16. Nb3 Bxf3 17. Rxf3 Nf5 18. Bf2 Be7.**

Black has to play 18... d6 in order to look out for counterplay. Now White builds up pressure on the d-file.

**19. Rd3 Rd8 20. Qe2 0–0 21. Nd4 Rfe8 22. Rad1 Qc7 23. Nxf5 exf5 24. Qd2 Qc4 25. a3 Qe6**



**26. h3.**

Caution is required as a 'greedy' pawn snatch would spoil everything: 26. Rxd7 Rxd7 27. Qxd7 Rd8 (exploiting the back rank threat!) 28. Qxd8† Bxd8 29. Rxd8† Kh7 30. Bh4 Qb6† 31. Kf1 Qe3 with an equal game.

**26... Kh7 27. Kh2 g5.**

Desperation, as White will get the d7-pawn.

**28. fxg5 Qxe5† 29. Bg3 Qg7 30. Bf4 f6 31. h4.**

An electronic friend would go for 31. g6† Qxg6 (31... Kh8 32. Rxd7 Rxd7 33. Qxd7) 32. Rxd7 Rxd7 33. Qxd7 with a winning position.

**31... d6 32. Rd5 fxg5 33. hxg5 Qg6**

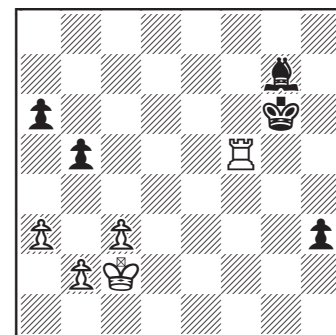
**34. Qd3 Rf8 35. Bxd6 Bxg5.**

After 35... Bxd6† 36. Rxd6 Qxd6† 37. Qxd6 Rxd6 38. Rxd6 White has the better endgame.

**36. Bxf8 Rxf8 37. Rd7† Kh6 38. g3 h4 39. Rd6 Bf6 40. Qe3† Kh7 41. Kg2 Re8 42. Qf2 Qg4 43. Re1 Rxe1 44. Qxe1 Bg7 45. Qe6.**

Time trouble. White should have kept control of g3 and played 45. Rxa6 with an easy win.

**45... Qxg3† 46. Kf1 Qg4 47. Rd5 Qf3† 48. Ke1 Qh1† 49. Ke2 Qg2† 50. Kd1 Qg4† 51. Kc2 h3 52. Qxf5† Qxf5† 53. Rxf5 Kg6**



**54. Rf3.**

Technique-wise, better is 54. Rf1 intending to cut off the King from his free pawn.

**54... h2 55. Rh3 Be5 56. Kd3 Kf5 57. Ke2 a5.**

After 57... Kg4 White has difficulty in getting control of the promotion square.

**58. Kf3 a4 59. Kg2 Ke4 60. Rh4† Bf4 61. Rh5 Be5 62. Rh4† Bf4.**

Zugzwang in time trouble!

**63. Kh1 Ke3 64. Rh5 Kd3 65. Rxb5 Kc2 66. c4 Kb1 67. c5 Kc2 68. c6 Bd6 69. Rb7 Be5 70. Rb4 Bg3 71. Rxa4 Kxb2 72. Ra7 Kb3 73. c7 1–0.**

It is clear that the current generation of European women's chess cel-

celebrates the art of the game in three ways:

1. full-time professionals in the international chess circuit (mainly from eastern Europe, due to socio-economic differences, in particular, in the New Independent States of the former USSR);
2. professionals with their family as the main focus (apart from those mentioned, e.g., the Georgian Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant who since 1996 has been married to Scottish international player Jonathan Grant and lives with her 5-year old daughter in Edinburgh. Nevertheless, she continues to play and, for instance, became the first woman to share the national Scottish men's title, with GM Paul Motwani, in 2003);
3. non-professionals with school, studies, or a job as their center of attention (apart from those mentioned, e.g., the former world championship candidate Alisa Maric who took a job with an oil company in 2001, acted as a TV anchorwoman for a chess show in 2003, and started as a lecturer in marketing at Belgrade University in the same year).

However, what unites them all is their passion for chess and a love for fighting chess...

Harald Fietz



# WHAT IS IN A NAME?

By Stan Dolber

About the only thing we really own after being born is our name, and that can be changed. We can get titles or be stripped of titles. In the end, it is a quick method of communication and identification.

Some of us have friendly nicknames, short from our more formal name, like Stan instead of Stansfield—fie on my parents.

But where does a name like “Gazza” for Garry Kasparov come from? Do people only write this or do they actually saying, “Hey Gazza, how’s it hanging?” Must be for insiders only, inside insiders.

When I see the name “Chucky” for Ivanchuk I wonder what people are thinking. Remember the little movie kid with the blue overalls named “Chucky?” Who would want to be associated with that? He was the meanest kid who wasn’t yet shackled to a cell inside hell! And it’s too close to “upchuck” for those who want to blow someone off.

Some names are cute I suppose, but

are they cute to the person wearing them. But I think the jury might be out on Vishy for Vishwanathan Anand. Sounds too close to “Fishy” which is not a name most chessplayers would want to be stuck with, we have enough problems. Yet in a recent article in *New in Chess*, Judit Polgar (does she have a nickname in front of her back?) referred to Anand as “Vishy.”

Some people do not want to be called by their last name. Eduard Gufeld did not like being called Gufeld. It’s too easy to associate last names with being in trouble. “Hey Johnny Smith, get you butt in the house.” Or, hey Tal, get over here and take your seat!” Crass isn’t it? Tal was often called Misha, a common nickname for Mikhail, but you didn’t hear people calling Botvinnik “Misha.”

*Inside Chess* was probably the biggest user of nicknames, some of them kind of awful. Now I see *Chess Life* referring to Shabalov as Shaba. I have read that nickname long before they started using it, but I wonder what