

Vladimir Kramnik

VLADIMIR KRAMNIK

Russia

Date of birth: June 25, 1975

It is an almost senseless challenge to describe Vladimir Kramnik in only a few lines. His personality has too many facets; his areas of interests are too diverse. What is clear is that Kramnik is not solely fixated on chess. Current affairs interest him just as intensively as numerous sport and cultural activities, several of which he regularly engages in. The cosmopolitan would love to enjoy life ever more intensively, but his drive to succeed holds this inclination within limits. What is it that marks out a world chess champion in him even though he doesn't focus exclusively on chess? People close to Kramnik often claim that this has something to do with his creative nature and strategic gifts. Kramnik considers chess less as a sport and more as the art of carrying out a long-term plan. The harmonious interplay of his pieces and the beauty of his game are already legendary. He is always searching for creative and new solutions, particularly when he is playing.

In many games, they say, he sees things that no computer can calculate and no other grandmasters could discover. The ingenious ideas would come to him quite easily, providing him with moments of pure joy. The artistic vein in the 32-year-old Muscovite must have been given to him in his cradle. His father Boris is a well-known sculptor; his mother Irina a music teacher. No wonder that journalists all over the world have dubbed Kramnik an "artist" or "painter".

Kramnik started to play chess at the age of five. At 12, his enormous talent was recognized in

Moscow

and encouraged. As a teenager, Kramnik got better and better – at only 16, he won the U18 World Championship. The list of his victories is long. He has already finished all major tournaments in the world as the victor. And he holds a record which made sporting history: Kramnik was unbeaten at the highest level in 86 classical games over 18 months up to July 2000.

World Championship

Thursday, November 2, 2000, London: Vladimir Kramnik became the World Chess Champion with a brilliant 8.5-6.5 result against Garry Kasparov (Russia), who could not win a single game. After Garry Kasparov had congratulated him, the greatest dream of his life became true. Exulting, Kramnik threw his arms up into the air in triumph. The audience's applause and the subsequent tumult will not be forgotten. It was a historic moment in the history of chess: Kramnik had not only won the lion's share of the two-million dollar prize money; his victory had ended Kasparov's 15-year-long reign on the chess throne.

First Challenge

In 2004, he faced off in another World Championship Match, this time in

Switzerland

: Kramnik successfully defended his title against the Hungarian super grandmaster Péter Lékó. In a complex strategic battle, he pulled off a supreme coup, winning in the 14th game – the last in the match – with a 7:7 tie. Kramnik was lucky because it was agreed before the match that he had to be beaten outright based on points – the challenger Lékó came heart-wrenchingly close to doing so.

2005 was a year of ups and downs for the World Champion. Kramnik was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, entered intense medical treatment, and disappeared from the tournament hubbub for six months. The break seemed to rejuvenate the Russian – at his comeback in the 2006 Chess Olympiad in

Turin

, he had the best individual score of all 1,000 participants. Kramnik was successful in several tournaments thereafter and on 1 January 2008 he again occupied the no. 1 position in the FIDE world ranking list.

The Unification Match

In October 2006, Kramnik faced the biggest challenge: the unification match that would decide who the next unique, absolute World Champion would be. In a historic fight against all sort of adversities, Kramnik defeated the FIDE champion Veselin Topalov (

Bulgaria

) to become the first unified World Champion after 1993, the one and only official World Chess Champion. His win in Elista was one of the most impressive victories in all of sports history.

Highlights:

- World Chess Champion 2000-2007
- Undefeated in three World Championship Matches
- Three-time Olympiad winner as a member of the Russian team
- Russian Honoured Master of Sport
- Current ELO rating: 2788

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