

History

Short history of the World Chess Championships

1886 – 1946

Wilhelm Steinitz (Austria/USA) was the first official World Champion in the chess history. In 1886, he defeated Johannes Hermann Zukertort in the first classical tournament for the World Chess Champion title. They played 20 games against each other – and Steinitz won by 12.5:7.5 points. Steinitz defended his title up to 1894. Emanuel Lasker (Germany) deprived Steinitz of his title and remained champion for 27 years – a unique record in the chess history. The next World Chess Champions were José Raoul Capablanca, Alexander Alekhine and Max Euwe.

1948 – 1993

Since 1948, World Chess Federation (FIDE) started to organize the World Chess Championships. After Alekhine's death in 1946, the new World Champion had to be determined. Thus, there was a tournament with several players where Mikhail Botvinnik (USSR) became a winner. Since that time, the reigning Champion should defend his title in a match against a challenger. Vassily Smyslov, Mikhail Tal, Tigran Petrossian and Boris Spassky - all of USSR - were the next World Champions. In 1972, Bobby Fischer (USA) broke through the dominance of the Soviet players by defeating Boris Spassky in Reykjavik. In 1975 Fischer refused to fight for his title, and as a result his challenger Anatoly Karpov was appointed as new Champion. Karpov – who played two times against Viktor Korchnoi and once against Garry Kasparov – kept his title until November 1985. Then it was Kasparov, who defeated Karpov by 13:11 points and became the new World Champion. 1986, 1987, and 1990 Kasparov succeeded in reserving his chess crown against Karpov, before he broke away from FIDE in 1993.

1993 – 2006

In 1993 Kasparov refused to defend his title under the conditions provided by FIDE – and together with his challenger Nigel Short (England) the World Champion decided to leave FIDE by holding the Championship match under the auspices of the new founded "Professional Chess Association" (PCA). Kasparov won the match against Short and retained the title of "Classical World Champion". Two years later he won the next title match against Viswanathan Anand (India) in the New York World Trade Center. Finally it was Thursday, the 2nd November 2000, when Kasparov's era ran out: with 8.5:6.5 victory Vladimir Kramnik (Russia) dethroned Kasparov, who did not manage to win a single game. Kramnik, at that time 25 years old, became the 14th Classical World Chess Champion. In October 2004 the next Championship took place: In Brissago (Switzerland) Kramnik held out against the attacks of the Hungarian Peter Leko and kept his title. Leko was qualified for this match by having won the Candidates' tournament in 2002 in Dortmund.

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On the other hand, FIDE continued organizing its own World Chess Championships from 1993 on. The FIDE title holders between 1993 and 2006: Anatoly Karpov (1993), Alexander Khalifman (1999), Viswanathan Anand (2000), Ruslan Ponomarev (2002), Rustam Kasimdzhanov (2004) and Veselin Topalov (2005).

The split of the chess world into two competitive championships ended in 2006. The duel between the Classical World Chess Champion Vladimir Kramnik and FIDE World Chess Champion Veselin Topalov took place in Elista from 23 September to 13 October 2006. In a historic battle this unification match combined both titles in one FIDE World Chess Championship. Having won this important event, Vladimir Kramnik became an undisputed World Chess Champion.

2007

The 2007 World Chess Championship took place in the capital of

Mexico

from 12 to 30 September. Eight strongest chess players of the planet participated in this event. Half of them had to go through the candidate matches in Elista in order to qualify for

Mexico City

. World Champion Vladimir Kramnik (Russia), Vishy Anand (India), Peter Leko (Hungary), Levon Aronian (Armenia), Alexander Morozevich (Russia), Boris Gelfand (Israel), Peter Svidler (Russia) and Alexander Grischuk (

Russia

) were competing in a round robin tournament. Before the event the World Chess Federation FIDE decided that a World Champion should be defined in a final match, so that

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had to be considered being the last championship in a tournament format.

Many honorary guests were present at the Opening Ceremony of the Championship. Among them were the FIDE Honorary President Florencio Campomanes and Mayor of

Mexico City

Marcelo Ebrard. The Championship in

Mexico

was shown a big interest from journalists and chess fans. The Ambassador of the Russian Federation in

Mexico

and Belize Valery Morozov was one of the honorary guests who made the ceremonial first move before one of the rounds. The players participated in every day press conferences, which really attracted a lot of attention among mass media and chess lovers. On a daily basis, all the major mass media companies provided blanket coverage on the championship in 6 languages: English, Spanish, German, French, Russian and Hindi. After the last round and the Closing Ceremony, all players became objects of close attention of the journalists and chess fans from

Mexico

who stood in a queue to get an autograph from the favorite Grandmaster.

Vishy Anand and World Champion Vladimir Kramnik were considered to be clear favorites before the start of the Championship. Many chess experts presumed that some young participants would join them in the fight for the title. Levon Aronian was considered to be the most perspective candidate.

Only part of the prognosis came true. During the tournament Vishy Anand, Vladimir Kramnik and the oldest participant, 38 year-old Israeli Grandmaster Boris Gelfand were fighting for the leadership in the tournament. There was no obvious competition between different generations: older generation demonstrated a full superiority.

From the very start of the tournament, Anand unquestionably became a leader of the tournament and proved it by winning the Champion's title. After the first round Indian Grandmaster gained 5 points out of 7. Gelfand was half point behind, then Kramnik (4 points). The culmination of the tournament was after the 9th round - after the second free day. Anand made a draw with Aronian whereas his persecutors (Gelfand and Kramnik) lost to Grischuk and Morozevich accordingly. A tremendous spurt of a leader from his persecutors became critical after the 11th round, when Vishy Anand made the fourth victory over Alexander Morozevich.

The participants had the following results before the last day off: Anand – 7.5 out of 11, Gelfand – 6. Kramnik, Aronian and Leko – 5.5. The Champion's title had been already defined – to be unattainable for the persecutors, Anand should not lose only. In the 12th round the heated struggle for the second place became enraged. Kramnik won Leko with white in his own style and gained "+1". At the same time, Boris Gelfand won Aronian with black in a critical game and retained the second place.

Two last rounds were also extremely interesting and resulting. In the next to last round Anand had to go through the last and serious enough test before winning the title of the World Chess Champion. The Russian Grandmaster Alexander Grischuk, playing white, created some problems for his competitor at the end. Anand reacted very quickly, but inaccurately. As a result, an Indian Grandmaster managed to escape, and the only thing he had to do is not to lose in the last round playing white. Peter Leko (playing black) did not object this result and the rivals agreed on a draw on the 20th move. Thus, Anand became inaccessible for his competitors.

The final burst in the last round let Ex-Champion Vladimir Kramnik catch up Boris Gelfand who was half point ahead of him. Kramnik confidentially won Aronian and managed "+2". Gelfand was trying to retain the second position and had all chances to win in his game against Morozevich, but finally they made draw. In accordance with the additional calculation system, which defines a seed, Kramnik was second in the tournament.

Final Standings 2007 World Chess Championship Tournament

Mexico City

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1. Viswanathan Anand (IND) 9 points
2. Vladimir Kramnik (RUS) 8
3. Boris Gelfand (ISR) 8
4. Peter Leko (HUN) 7.5
5. Peter Svidler (RUS) 6.5
6. Alexander Morozevich (RUS) 6
7. Levon Aronian (ARM) 6
8. Alexander Grischuk (RUS) 5.5

In accordance with the FIDE regulations this result leads to the titanic clash between the two best chess players of the world: Viswanathan Anand Vs Vladimir Kramnik will play the 2008 World Chess Championship match: a duel the world of chess is waiting for so many years. The UEP obtained all the rights with regard to organization and commercialisation of this match. Our company – together with FIDE and its partners – will announce more details on this unique event in the next weeks and months to come.