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ECU E-Magazine February 2025



#EICC2025

The European Individual Chess Championship 2025 is set to take place from 14-27 March in Eforie Nord, Romania.

Nearly 400 players from 40 European federations will compete for the title of the European Champion, 20 qualification spots for the next FIDE World Cup, and the prize fund of 100.000 euros.



In this edition of the ECU E-Magazine you may read about European Individual (Open & Women) Chess Championships 2025, Prague Chess Festival 2025, ECU activities and new collaborations.



Prague Chess Festival 2025 concluded



Chess Makes You Smarter.

In February 2025 edition of the ECU E-Magazine you may read about

- "L'Echiquier Pour La Vie" social foundation created in Paris, France
- European Chess Union partners with SenseRobot
- European Individual Chess Championship 2025 in Eforie Nord, Romania
- European Women's Chess Championship 2025 in Rhodes, Greece
- Activities of the ECU Commissions

European Chess Union has its seat in Switzerland.
European Chess Union is an independent association founded in 1985 in Graz, Austria. European Chess Union has 54 National federations members, and each year organises more than 20 prestigious events.
Website: europechess.org

Contents:



In brief...

- The «L'Echiquier Pour La Vie" foundation, under the auspices of the FACE Foundation and in partnership with the French Chess Federation, was founded in Paris, France. The foundation aims to use chess in France and internationally to promote inclusion and prevent and combat exclusion in all its forms.

- **European Individual Chess Championship 2025** will be held from 14-27 March in Eforie Nord, Romania. The event will be played in 11 rounds, swiss system, with the total prize fund of 100.000 EUR and 20 qualification spots

for the next FIDE World Chess Cup. Nearly 400 players from 40 European federations registered for the event.

- **European Women's Chess Championship 2025** is set to take place from 30 March to 12 April in Rhodes, Greece. The event gathers nearly 120 players from more than 20 federations, and will be played 11 rounds, swiss system. The total prize of the event is 60.000 EUR, with 10 qualification spots for the next FIDE Women's World Chess Cup.



"L'Echiquier Pour La Vie" social foundation created in Paris, France

A new social foundation is born in Paris, under the presidency of Franck Droin Chairman of Social Commission of European Chess Union.

The "L'Echiquier Pour La Vie" foundation, under the auspices of the FACE Foundation and in partnership with the French Chess Federation, aims to use chess in France and internationally to promote inclusion and prevent and combat exclusion in all its forms.

The ceremony was attended by Jean Castex, former Prime Minister of France and President of FACE Foundation, Jose Damiani, President of International Mind Sport Association, the ECU President Zurab Azmaiparashvili, three French chess legends: Joël Lautier,

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Laurent Fressinet, Didier Pascal Vice President of French Chess Federation, Stephane Escarfe, Chairman of FIDE Rules Commission, Jean-Claude Moingt the chess manager and organiser of European Corporate Championship and many distinguished guests.

The Chess for Life Foundation's programmes and actions are divided into six areas of commitment to promote inclusion and combat exclusion:

- Young people in need
- People with disabilities
- People affected by cancer
- People with autism spectrum disorders
- Older people

Detailed information can be found [here](#).

European Chess Union partners with SenseRobot

The European Chess Union (ECU), the governing body for chess across Europe with 54 member federations, is proud to announce a landmark partnership with SenseRobot based in Hong Kong (www.senserobotchess.com), a leading innovator in AI technology solutions.

This strategic collaboration marks a significant step forward in ECU's commitment to advancing chess education and technology across Europe. As part of this comprehensive partnership, each ECU member federation will receive a complimentary AI chess robot, demonstrating both organizations' dedication to making advanced chess technology accessible to players across the continent.

"This partnership with SenseRobot represents our ongoing commitment to embracing innovative technologies in chess education and play," said Zurab Azmaiparashvili, President of the European Chess Union. "By providing our member federations with state-of-the-art chess robots, we're enhancing the learning experience for players of all levels."

"Our partnership with the European Chess Union reflects our commitment to innovation in chess education and competition," said Tommy Tang, Founder and CEO of SenseRobot. "By equipping ECU's member federations with our AI-powered chess robots, we make advanced chess technology more accessible and engaging, especially for young players. This collaboration not only enhances training but also inspires more children to explore chess through interactive and intelligent gameplay. We are excited to work with ECU to shape the future of chess education in Europe."



SENSEROBOT BECOMES THE OFFICIAL AI PROVIDER OF EUROPEAN CHESS UNION

The partnership includes:

- Distribution of chess robots to all 54 ECU member federations
- Comprehensive marketing collaboration
- Integration of Sense Robot technology in ECU events and programs





Detailed information about the partnership can be found on the [ECU Website](#).

Sponsors page: <https://www.europechess.org/senserobot/>

Introduction video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zn27y1W671c>



Empowering The European Chess Community with modern AI technologies

The partnership includes:

- Distribution of chess robots to all 54 ECU member federations
- Comprehensive marketing collaboration
- Integration of Sense Robot technology in ECU events and programs

This initiative will reach European chess community of millions chess players and enthusiasts across Europe, setting a new standard for AI technology integration in chess education and competition.

Brief info SenseRobot:

As a pioneer in the home chess robot industry, we are redefining the future of home intelligence through groundbreaking AI innovation. As the world's first company to achieve large-scale production of home-use AI robotic arms, we're setting a new standard in intelligent living—bringing the art of chess and the power of technology to everyday life. Rooted in our core philosophy of “innovation and companionship,” SenseRobot™ transforms cold technology into warm, engaging experiences. Our robots are more than just chess masters—they're family companions, sparking joy, fostering learning, and creating meaningful moments of connection.

We are relentless in our pursuit of innovation, driving the global adoption of AI-powered solutions. With every move, we aim to bring families closer, making life smarter, more joyful, and full of infinite possibilities.

UPCOMING

European Individual Chess Championship 2025

The European Individual Chess Championship 2025 will take place from 14-27 March in Eforie Nord, Romania.

The event will be played in 11 rounds, swiss system, with the time control of 90 minutes for 40 moves, plus 30 minutes until the end of the game, with 30-second increment for each move starting from the move one.

The total prize fund of the event is 100.000 EUR, with 20.000 EUR reserved for the Winner. The European Individual Chess Championship 2025 is a qualifying event for the FIDE World Cup.

According to the FIDE regulations for World Cup and the ECU Board decision, 20 players* will qualify. (**Under the current FIDE World Cup regulations, FIDE is the only body responsible for the qualification spots*)

The event is open for all players from National Chess Federations members of the European Chess Union (ECU) without rating or title limitations and the registration deadline is 15th of February.

More than 350 players from 37 European federations already registered for the event and the top seeds are:

Bogdan-Daniel Deac (ROU, 2692), Alexey Sarana (SRB, 2689), Jordan Van Foreest (NED, 2676), Pavel Eljanov (UKR, 2666), Shant Sargsyan (ARM, 2666), Daniel Dardha (BEL, 2665), David Anton Guijarro (ESP, 2663), David Navara (CZE, 2663), Radoslaw Wojtaszek (POL, 2659), and Benjamin Gledura (HUN, 2658).

Official Telecom provider of ECU, GlobalCell prepared special free data package for all players.

List of registered players can be found [here](#). Detailed information can be found on the [Official website](#).



UPCOMING



EWCC

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

European Women's Chess Championship 2025 March 30th - April 12th, Rhodes, Greece

The 24th European Women's Chess Championship is set to take place from 30 March to 12 April 2025 in Rhodes, Greece.

Nearly 120 players from more than 20 European federations registered for the event and the top seeds are: GM Nino Batsiashvili (GEO, 2473), IM Teodora Injac (SRB, 2454), IM Meri Arabidze (GEO, 2447), IM Stavroula Tsolakidou (GRE, 2445), IM Dinara Wagner (GER, 2440), IM Olga Badelka (AUT, 2429), IM Lela Javakhishvili (GEO, 2429), GM Anna Ushenina (UKR, 2428), GM Antoaneta Stefanova (BUL, 2426) etc.

The list of registered players can be found [here](#).

The European Women's Chess Championship 2025 will be played in 11 rounds, swiss system, with the time control of 90 minutes for 40 moves, plus 30 minutes until the end of the game, with 30 seconds increment for each move, starting from move one.

The total prize fund of the event is 60.000 EUR, with 10.000 EUR reserved for the Winner of the event. The European Women's Chess Championship 2025 is a qualification event for the next FIDE Women's World Chess Cup, and according to the decision of the ECU at least 10 players will qualify* (**Under the current FIDE Women's World Cup regulations, FIDE is the only body responsible for rules of FIDE Women's World Cup the qualification spots.*)

The official hotel and the playing venue of the event is ****Rodos Palace Conference Hotel.

Detailed information about the event can be found on the [Official website](#).

Official regulations are available on the [ECU Website](#).

INVITATION FOR BIDS: European Chess Championships 2026-2027

The European Chess Union invites the National federations members to submit bids for the organization of European Chess Championships in 2026 and 2027.

The bids must be submitted exclusively in the Bid form regulated by the ECU (in the attachment). For any additional documents delivered separately from the bid form, it must be stated in the bid form what they relate to. Any document that reaches the ECU office after the official deadline will not be taken into consideration.

The deadline for bids to reach the European Chess Union office is by Wednesday 30th of April 2025 by 4 PM CET. All the bids must reach the European Chess Union office by e-mail: ecu.secretary.general@gmail.com

A bid will only be considered if the federation/organizer concerned has paid a bid fee (as the table of bid invitation shows), for each



championship, to the bank account of the European Chess Union within one week after the deadline.

Detailed information and information about the playing hall capacity can be found in the official invitation for bids that can be found on the [ECU Website](#).

Championships open for bids:



The bidding procedure is open for the following ECU Chess Championships in 2026:

1. European Amateur Chess Championship 2026
2. European Women's Rapid & Blitz Championship 2026
3. European Corporate Chess Championship 2026

The bidding procedure is open for the following 2027 Championships:

1. European Senior Championship
2. European Senior Team Championship
3. European Youth Team Championship
4. European School Championship
5. European Rapid & Blitz Championship
6. European Women's Rapid & Blitz Championship
7. European Amateur Championship
8. European Corporate Chess Championship
9. European Women's Chess Championship (combined with a next year's event).

Magna anim duis culpa sunt eiusmod voluptate veniam non. Deserunt consequat labore eiusmod excepteur consectetur reprehenderit id quis laboris labore consectetur veniam.

European Youth Team Chess Championship 2025



European Youth Team Chess Championship

CATEGORIES U12 AND U18
Terme Čatež, Slovenia
04th – 12th July 2025



The event will be held in the official hotel complex comprising of the following 2 hotels: ****Hotel Terme and ****Hotel Toplice. The playing venue is located in Hotel Toplice which is within walking distance from Hotel Terme.

System of play:

The Championship will be played according to Swiss system in 7 rounds, with the time control of 90 min. + 30 sec. increment for every move played starting from move 1.

The European Youth Team Chess Championship 2025 will be organised in Brezice, Slovenia, from 4th July (arrival day) to 12th July 2025 (departure day).

The event will include four (4) separate competitions, an open competition and a girl's competition in both age categories U12 and U18. The playing members of the teams shall not have reached the age of 12 or 18, depending on category, by 1st January 2025:

- Players U12 should have a birth date of 1st January 2013 and after.
- Players U18 should have a birth date of 1st January 2007 and after.

Each national federation member of the European Chess Union (ECU) has the right to enter up to four (4) teams of four (4) players and one (1) reserve in the open competitions and up to four (4) teams of two (2) female players and one (1) reserve in the girl competitions.

These teams may represent the national federation, a region, a city, a club, or a school.



Entry forms must be filled and sent to the Tournament office no later than 30th May 2025. A complete registration form must include surname/s, first name/s, FIDE ID number, FIDE rating and title, and passport number or identity card number of each player, captain, and each accompanying person. It also must include the name and telephone, e-mail of the chief of delegation who must be an adult.

Detailed information can be found on the [ECU Website](#).



European Universities Chess Championship 2025

European Universities Chess Championship 2025, part of the European Universities Games, will take place from 16-20 September in Yerevan, Armenia. The event is organized by Armenian State University of Economics, Armenian Student Sports Federation and Chess Academy of Armenia, governed by the European University Sports Association (EUSA).

The European Universities Chess Championship 2025 consists of four tournaments: Rapid Open Team Tournament, Blitz Open Team Tournament, Women Rapid Team Tournament, and Women Blitz Team Tournament. Every match shall be played over two boards, and the players in each team must be listed in a fixed board order.

Each Tournament will be played according to the Swiss system, with the time control of 25 minutes + 10 seconds increment for Rapid tournaments, and the time control of 3 minutes + 2 seconds increment for Blitz Tournaments. The final decision about the tournaments format will be made by CTC after consideration of number of registered teams.

The delegation will consist of 2 (two) athletes and maximum of 2 (two) officials. The head of the delegation must be appointed. Universities can participate with more than 1 (one) team and Individual entries are not possible.

All participants as well as the officials (arbiters, captains and others being in the playing area) must comply with the dress code of the European Chess Union.

Participants of the EUG are the students between 17 and 30 years old, from the Universities and similar institutions with status of an institution of higher education recognized by an appropriate national authority of their country. Participants shall be nominated through their NUSA (EUSA Members) and detailed information about the registration can be found on the official website.

Detailed information can be found on the [ECU Website](#).



Caption text

[Official webpage of the European Universities Chess Championship:
https://chess2025.eusa.eu/](https://chess2025.eusa.eu/)

DEVELOPMENT FUNDING



FIDE Planning and Development Funding Programme Guidelines

FIDE Planning and Development Commission announced the Funding Programme for 2025 and soon will open the submissions process for National Chess Federations and Affiliated Members, FIDE Continents, FIDE Zones, FIDE Commissions, FIDE Affiliated Organizations.

The Development Programme's objective is to help the Applicant to implement projects and activities that aim to improve the development of Chess in all its forms. The proposed Development Programme must be in line with the global FIDE orientations and the Applicant's strategic plan:

- Activities must correspond to the scope/area/level of importance of the Applicant (e.g. a FIDE Commission or a Continental Chess Organization is not

expected to request funds for a project of an individual federation level unless it is a proven individual pilot activity to be further replicated at the respective level).

- The proposed projects should have an incentive/motivating orientation based on KPIs baseline, with the aim to fill in the blanks in the Applicant's development status.

The following FIDE orientations should be considered as priorities:

- Orientation 1: "1 women national team in each federation": Federations with no women team in the previous Olympiad should have this project as a priority.

- Orientation 2: "host rated and/or norm events in each federation": Federations of level 3-4-5 with no rated events should have this project as a priority; federations of level 2-3 with no norm events should have this project as a priority.

- Orientation 3: "double the number of kids engaged in educational chess"
- Orientation 4: "Social activities and projects where chess impacts on social life": a key orientation for 2025 as the Year of Social Chess in FIDE.

More information about the FIDE Planning and Development Funding Programme can be found in the Guideline that was published on the [ECU Website](#).

Prague Chess Festival 2025

The 7th edition of the Prague Chess Festival took place from 27 February to 7 March in Czech Republic, with three main round-robin events (Masters, Challengers and Futures) and plenty of side tournaments.

GM Aravindh Chithambaram emerged as the sole Winner of the Masters event after a thrilling last round, scoring 6 points. Chithambaram drew his final game against GM Ediz Gurel, letting Praggnanandhaa to catch him on the top, but Praggnanandhaa lost against GM Anish Giri to finish the event in a tie for the second place. Scoring 5/9 points each, GM Anish Giri, GM Wei Yi and GM Praggnanandhaa shared 2-4 place, but Anish Giri had the best tiebreaks to clinch silver, and Wei Yi came third.

The Winner of the Challengers tournament was determined in the playoff match since GM Nodirbek Yakubboev and GM Jonas Buhl Bjerre tied for first place with the score of 7 points each. The playoffs were played in two games, and Nodirbek Yakubboev won the match to qualify for the next Prague Chess Masters tournament. GM Marc'Andria Maurizzi finished the event in the third place, scoring 6 points.



Sara Sunea Maria emerged as the sole Winner of the Futures competition, scoring 7/9 points. She was ahead of Zuzana Stara and Greta Viti who tied for silver with 6 points each, but Zuzana Stara had better tiebreaks to finish second and Greta Viti came third.

Final rankings and detailed information about the event can be found on the [Official website](#).

Photos by Anežka Kružíková and Petr Vrabec

The Futures event was supported by the European Chess Union.



Third leg of FIDE Women's Grand Prix 2024/2025 concluded in Monaco

The third leg of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix 2024/2025 took place from 17-28 February in Monte-Carlo, Monaco.

After intense nine rounds, three players finished the event tying for the top with the score of 5.5 points each: GM Aleksandra Goryachkina (FIDE, 2546), GM Humpy Koneru (IND, 2523) and IM Batkhuyag Munguntuul (MGL, 2331). Having the best tiebreaks (Sonneborn-Berger), Aleksandra Goryachkina emerged as the Winner of the event and leads on the FIDE Women's Grand Prix standings with 236.67 points.

Humpy Koneru won silver medal, and holds fourth position on the FIDE Women's Grand Prix standings with 161.67 points. Batkhuyag Munguntuul claimed bronze medal and has 121.67 points on the FIDE Women's Grand Prix standings to be in the seventh place.

The final round delivered interesting games and high-stakes drama, with Batkhuyag Munguntuul and Aleksandra Goryachkina playing for gold in a direct encounter. Their game finished in a draw, allowing Humpy Koneru to join them at the top after defeating Bibisara Assaubayeva.



The Closing ceremony of the event took place with the attendance of the ECU representatives: ECU President Zurab Azmaiparashvili, ECU Deputy President and Deputy Chair of the FIDE Management Board Dana Reizniece, Tournament Director and ECU Vice President Jean Michel Rapaire, and ECU Vice President Alojzije Jankovic.

Photos by Niki Riga



World Junior Chess Champions 2025 crowned in Petrovac, Montenegro

The 2025 World Junior Open and Girls Chess Championships took place from 27 February to 8 March in Petrovac, Montenegro.

The events were played in 11 rounds, swiss system, with Open and Girls sections, and participation of 255 players from 63 federations.

GM Pranav V (IND, 2615) emerged as the sole Winner of the Open event with the impressive score of 9/11 points, without a single loss in the tournament and clinched the title of World Junior Chess Champion 2025.

IM Matic Lavrencic (SLO, 2446) and GM Amar Elham (NOR, 2537) tied for second place, both finishing with 8.5/11 points. Lavrencic claimed silver medal thanks to a superior Buchholz score (a secondary tiebreaker), and Elham won bronze medal.

WIM Anna Shukhman (FIDE, 2365) clinched the title in the Girls competition, winning the event with the score of 9/11 points. Shukhman suffered a loss in the third round against WIM Ayan Allahverdiyeva (AZE, 2284) but bounced back and won the tournament.

Scoring 8/11 points each, WIM Ayan Allahverdiyeva (AZE, 2284) and the top seeded IM Lu Miaoyi (CHN, 2432) tied for the second place, but Allahverdiyeva had better tiebreaks and won silver, while Miaoyi claimed bronze.

Final rankings and all results can be found [here](#).

Detailed information about the event can be found on the [official website of the tournament](#).



III. International Congress of Social and Therapeutic Chess - Menorca (Spain)

We are happy to support great initiatives and efforts individuals are making to build a community around chess as a tool to make a difference.

After last year's success, Pep Suárez is once again bringing together experts, researchers and professionals for the Conference on Social and Therapeutic Chess. The event showcases the growing recognition of chess as a tool in therapy and social settings for enhancing mental well-being, promoting social inclusion and improving the quality of life for many individuals.

Chess offers numerous benefits - educational, social and therapeutic across various fields, all of which are equally important and valuable for so many individuals.

Experts who have successfully integrated chess into therapy and social programs will be demonstrating its effectiveness in diverse contexts. They will present on neurological and psychological effects of chess, as well as real-world applications in healthcare and inclusion initiatives. They have seen firsthand how chess can change lives, from children with learning challenges to older adults maintaining cognitive function.

[Read more](#)



**21-22
March
2025**

The main objective of the conference is to analyze the current state of experiences that combine chess with health at an international level.

The versatility of chess as a therapeutic tool has been studied in multiple contexts, and the conference will be a platform to share research, success stories and innovative practices.

The Open Window A Project for more Inclusion in Chess

The Education Commission is excited to introduce and support an amazing inclusivity project "Offenes Fenster" (The Open Window).

Inclusion is a commitment to making the world a place where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can participate fully and equally. In the world of chess, it is easy to assume

that the playing field is inherently equal. After all, chess doesn't require physical exertion like other sports. But, this assumption overlooks the significant challenges that people with disabilities face in the chess community. Challenges that those without disabilities often don't even consider. This is where The Open

Window project steps in. Started in 2024 by Tatiana Flores and Laura Schalkhäuser, both of whom have personally experienced discrimination and exclusion due to their disabilities, The Open Window provides a space for dialogue, resources and shared experiences to support true inclusion in chess. [Read more](https://offenesfenster.eu)



**Projekt „Offenes Fenster“
Für mehr Inklusion im Schachsport**

White Nile Chess Academy – Sudan Making a difference with Chess in Education

Mohamed Abdalslam Alhbeb is the driving force behind the White Nile Chess Academy in Sudan and we are happy to share his story and support the Academy and his coaching journey.

"Despite the challenges, the academy remains committed to its mission. When war broke out in Sudan, many

families were displaced to our city in search of safety. Schools ceased operations, leaving children without access to education, sports, or proper care. The psychological toll of the war on children, who lost their homes, families, and friends, was immense.

In response, the Academy

expanded its activities to include shelter centers, offering free chess training and organizing tournaments for displaced children. Through chess, we aim to alleviate the psychological effects of war and provide a sense of normalcy and hope to these children."

[Read more](#)



Chess in Primary Education Academic Training Course



Moses Kwereba Gathua, chess coach
(Kenya)

The Academic Training Course "*Chess in Primary Education*" by the European Chess Union and the University of the Aegean gets global recognition, thanks to our partners in the African Chess Confederation

[Read more](#)

Well deserved achievement
Moses Kwereba Gathua!

We are happy to see that our course has been a valuable journey for you and acknowledged and supported by the African Chess Confederation. We educators are all lifelong learners and gaining an Academic

Qualification is a big step forward to making a difference with Chess in Education in meaningful ways. We wish you the very best in your future endeavours. Keep inspiring and never stop learning!

===

The purpose of the Academic

Training Course is to meet the growing demand for qualified educators in the field of Chess in Education. As chess is increasingly recognized as a valuable tool in education there is a clear need for well-trained teachers and tutors.

[Learn more about the course on our website](#)

Celebrating the newest titled ECU School Chess Teachers!

On the weekend of 8-9 March 2025, we celebrated 19 new graduates who have successfully completed the **ECU101 - The SMART Method to Teach Chess** training course and passed the test at the end of the course.

Thank you to all the participants for the many useful conversations, sharing your insights and experiences

with each other. We wish you a fruitful journey in using chess as an educational tool to make a positive impact with #ChessinEducation!

Feedback from Prabitha Urwyler:

Thank you ECU Education Commission for such an interactive, insightful, and motivating course—ECU101:

The SMART Method to Teach Chess training! Huge gratitude to my fellow participants and our amazing instructors (Jesper Hall John Foley ChessPlus Peszleg Brigitta) for keeping us hooked and engaged. Excited to apply these valuable lessons!

[See more events](#)

ECU101 - The SMART Method to Teach Chess | Teacher Training Course

THREE GOALS FOR A CHESS LESSON

Children have fun

Develop children social, emotional and intellectual skills

Stimulate children to play or study chess outside school



Chess Culture and Gestures: The Yakubboev vs. Vaishali Rejected Handshake Furor

A “Handshake Incident” which took place recently (27/01/2025), at the Tata Steel Challengers tournament in Wijk aan Zee in the Netherlands, created quite a buzz in the chess world and on social media.

Just before the start of their 4th round game, Uzbek G.M Nodirbek Yakubboev had refused to shake the extended hand of his opponent, Indian G.M Vaishali Rameshbabu. The Uzbek national team member explained that he does not touch women due to religious behaviors and morals which he practices.

Vaishali’s hand was left hanging in the air for a second, but she apparently quickly understood the situation, retracted her hand, and did not offer a handshake at the end of the game. Not surprisingly, the incident sparked quite a stir in the chess world. A day later, Yakubboev had profusely apologized to Vaishali, both publicly and personally, meeting her with her mother and brother Praggnanandhaa, and gifting her with flowers and chocolates.

At this reconciliatory meeting, Yakubboev also expressed respect for Indian chess players as a whole, and for the chess brother and sister G.M duo in particular. At the end of the meeting, Yakubboev shook Praggnanandhaa’s hand and conducted the Namaste gesture towards Vaishali. Vaishali and family had accepted the apology wholeheartedly and it seems the matter is resolved.

This unfortunate incident brings to light the potential pitfalls entailing events involving multiple cultures which sometimes practice conflicting gestures and values.

The Handshake History

Humans have been shaking each other’s hands for thousands of years. It was a way to communicate peacefulness – extending an empty hand was a pretty direct way of saying, “Look, I’m not holding a weapon, I come in peace.”

Nowadays, we shake hands with new acquaintances, at business meetings, or to express an agreement to a suggestion/proposition. The dynamics range from person to person culture to culture. Nowadays, a handshake is a mid level formality gesture. Not as intimate as a hug or a kiss, nor is it as formal as a military salute.

Prior and following a chess game it might be too much to expect opponents to kiss each other, while saluting might seem too formal, distant and out of place – the handshake had become the norm.

But should it be?

The above-mentioned handshake incident might have put the whole handshake practice under renewed scrutiny.

Fide Laws of Chess do not mandate a handshake but say this:

“The players shall take no action that will bring the game of chess into disrepute (Article 11.1)

A pre-game and post-game handshake is a chess social norm.

The handshake proponents must not forget that in many cultures, physical contact, and especially cross-gender physical contact, is culturally and socially restricted. In many Far East cultures, a bow or a Namaste is used in place of a handshake.

In other cultures, in many opposite-sex greetings you have kisses in the air which also avoid physical contact. In my opinion, the main issue in the handshake incident was not so much Yakubboev’s refusal to extend his hand for a handshake, but his lack of effort to come up with any alternative gesture that would conform to his no physical contact values.

In other words, it was not an occurrence of players merely not shaking hands, it was a case of an offered handshake which was refused and not reciprocated, without offering any counter gesture like a bow or a Namaste or anything of that sort.

Arbiters Corner

You can look but you can't touch

Chess is a global game. Fide has almost 200 member federations. We all play together the same game, same rules, with the same pieces, but we all come from different backgrounds. We as a multi-cultural society, need to understand that a handshake, being the most common greeting as it is – is not the only option.

We must respect cultures/individuals who, for viable reasons prefer a non-physical greeting. We must expect and respect.

On the other hand (pun intended), those non-contact greeters must understand that they cannot just reject the physical contact greeting overture, but must counter it with a non-physical gesture of respect. Cultural respect must be exercised both ways.

Non-contact players would serve themselves right if they would communicate with their respective organizers and arbiters, explaining the situation. That would allow the arbiters to communicate with their opponents prior to the game and most certainly avoid any confusion and embarrassment. In an interview with Sagar Shah, Yakubboev accepted responsibility for failing to inform arbiters or opponent in advance about the issue.



I can understand that this is not a perfect solution because women may correctly claim “why is he shaking hands with other men and not with women? Am I a less of a person”?

What happens, for example, if a player refuses to shake hands with Caucasians and Asians and is only willing to shake hands with New Zealanders and Australians?

Conclusion:

Our world is diverse. We need to find a way to maintain respect and honor between all chess players all over the spectrum regardless of gender, race, religion etc. We must further educate ourselves, and bring out to light, the various intricacies of our global multi-culturalism. What is perfectly normal and mundane for some, might be a crying murder for other chess family members. It should be noted and taken under advisement, that a decision to refrain from any physical contact could also be attributed to health considerations and might have nothing to do with cross gender limitations. For the organizers and arbiters, I would suggest that every action of a participant must be adjudicated by its specific facts and merits and the response be in accordance with maintaining respect, dignity, and honor for all.

Gender Tension

Physical contact between the two genders is a sensitive issue in many cultures. It goes both ways. Some men are unwilling/forbidden from touching women and so are some women towards men.

As organizers/principals/arbiters, our personal opinions about the matter are irrelevant. The only fact we should account – Is this specific behavior, conducted in a bona fide practice of genuine values, or is it masking an intent to disrespect and/or humiliate the other party. That would determine the outcome.

Here in the Yakubboev-Vaishali Incident, it seemed clearly the handshake rejection had nothing to do with offending. True, it was poorly handled (pun intended) by Yakubboev, but there was no apparent ill intent from him towards Vaishali. From my experience, Yakubboev is a polite and fine young man with impeccable manners. Vaishali on her part, had responded gallantly, accepting Yakubboev's apology, and... she won the game.

At the Prague Chess Challenger event, which took place a month after the Tata Steel event, Yakubboev was paired against Indian WGM Divya Deshmukh. He greeted her pleasantly with a Namaste before and after the game. It seems that the whole matter is settled and the Namaste gesture might prove to be a widely accepted alternative gesture to the handshake.

IN MEMORIAM: Boris Spassky (1937-2025) World Chess Champion & Legendary Grandmaster

European Chess Union mourns the loss of Boris Vasilievich Spassky, the 10th World Chess Champion, who passed away on February 27, 2025, at the age of 87. A towering figure in chess history, Spassky's legacy spans decades of extraordinary achievements and contributions to the royal game. Born in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) on January 30, 1937, Spassky rose to prominence as a chess prodigy, becoming the youngest Soviet player to achieve the title of International Master at age 16. He reached the pinnacle of chess excellence by winning the World Championship in 1969.

Spassky will forever be remembered as one half of the historic 1972 World Championship match against Bobby Fischer, dubbed "The Match of the Century." This contest, set against the backdrop of the Cold War, transcended chess to become a cultural phenomenon that captured global attention. His elegant chess style, characterized by universal and harmonious play, made him one of the most respected and admired players in chess history. Spassky's contributions to theory and his sporting attitude at the board set a standard for generations of players to follow.

Beyond his competitive achievements, Spassky was known for his gentlemanly demeanor and wit, making him a beloved figure in the chess community.

ECU extends its deepest condolences to Boris Spassky's family, friends, and the global chess community. His passing marks the end of an era in chess history, but his influence on the game will remain eternal.

We honor his memory and celebrate his extraordinary contributions to chess. May he rest in peace.



Back in time...

About 7th World Chess Champion - Vasily Smyslov

Vasily Smyslov (24 March, 1921 - 27 March, 2010) was a Soviet Grandmaster, accomplished baritone singer, composer of chess problems. Smyslov became the 7th World Chess Champion and hold the title from 1957 to 1958.

Vasily Smyslov was born in Moscow, and his competitive chess experiences began at the age of 14. In 1938, he won the USSR Junior Championship. That same year, he tied for 1st-2nd places in the Moscow City Championship. In his first Soviet final, the 1940 USSR Chess Championship, he took 3rd place, finishing ahead of the reigning World champion Mikhail Botvinnik.

Smyslov was one of the five players selected to compete for the first Candidates. After that, he competed in 8 Candidates Tournament, qualification event for the World Chess Championship.

After winning the Candidates Tournament in Zürich 1953, Smyslov played a match with Botvinnik for the title the following year. The match ended in a draw, after 24 games, and Botvinnik retained his title. Three years later, Smyslov won Candidates Tournament in Amsterdam, qualifying for his 12nd match against Botvinnik in 1957, and won the title scoring 12½-9½.



Vasily Smyslov said about chess:

- *I have frequently stated that I regard chess as an art form, where creativity prevails over other factors.*
- *Despite the development of chess theory, there is much that remains secret and unexplored in chess.*
- *My study of chess was accompanied by a strong attraction to music, and it was probably thanks to this that from childhood I became accustomed to thinking of chess as an art, for all the science and sport involved in it.*

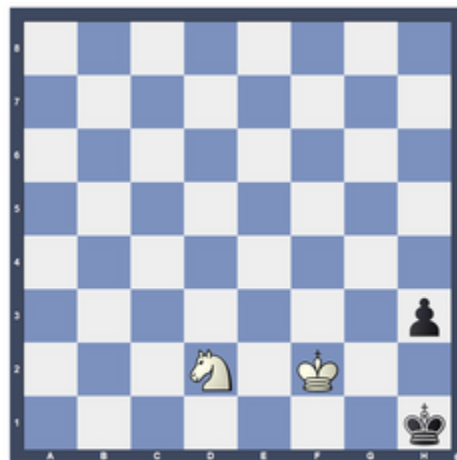
In this edition of the ECU E-Magazine we prepared three positions where white mates in two. Solutions will be published in the next edition.

Solutions from ECU E-Magazine January 2025

#Puzzle 1: 1.Rg5! Kh7 2.Qg7#

#Puzzle 2: 1.Rc1+ Bc6/Rc6 2.Nb6#

#Puzzle 3: 1.Rxa7+!! Bxa7 2.Nc7#



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