

**WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP
NALCHIK, 28th AUGUST- 18TH SEPTEMBER 2008.**

In the Presidential Board Meeting, held in Athen 31st May & 1st June, 2008 the FIDE President, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov advised that the Women's World Championship would be organized in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, Russia from 28th August to 18th September, 2008. The FIDE PB has approved the list of qualifiers and the schedule of the World Women's Championship 2008. All qualifiers must send signed Undertaking to the FIDE Secretariat by the deadline of 17 June 2008.

The list of 64 Players was published on the FIDE website, then 3rd July 2008 the pairings of the 1st Round and the Pairings Tree for the Championship.

On 1st August American player, Irina Krush inform the FIDE about her withdrawal from the Women's World Championship, then the organizers has a big problem after the unfortunate events in South Ossetia, the Georgian players not get permission from their government. Before this crisis emerged, there were some speculations that Nalchik is not a safe place and some of the players were afraid to travel there.

Statement of the Chairman of Organizing Committee of the WWCC 2008, Arsen Kanokov on 14th August:

„Organizing Committee of the Women's World Chess Championship 2008 is deeply disappointed and bewildered by the attempts of some circles by no means spots ones to break up the competition of the strongest women chess players of the world scheduled to be held in Nalchik.

Sharing entirely and fully attitude of FIDE and European Chess Union toward an open letter of Georgian women chess players, we believe that representatives of a famous chess school shouldn't be pawns in somebody's unworthy game. The preparation for the Championship has entered its final stages and the Organizing Committee claims that high requirements of FIDE to all aspects of preparation and holding the most significant chess event of the year will be met and nothing will prevent chess players of the participating countries from showing their game potential. See you in peaceful and hospitable capital of Kabardino-Balkaria!”

The 53 participants from the 27 countries, seconds, accompanying persons were with love welcome and it was a real big fest, then on 28th August evening, FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov has officially opened Women's World Chess Championship 2008 in Nalchik. During the pompous ceremony in Zeleny Theatre, local dancers and singers entertained the public and the chess game was also personified through youngsters in costumes. In his welcome speech, President of the Republic Kabardino-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov expressed the gratitude and hapiness of the republic to have the World Championship in its capital and promised good organization, great interest from the inhabitants, excellent conditions and clean, healthy environment for the tournament. Alexander Zhukov, President of the Russian Chess Federation delivered the greeting address of Dmitriy Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation praising the beautiful, intellectual game and the Russian chess school. He also expressed the belief that the peaceful competition of chess players turns into a real festival of that sport, promoting development and strengthening of international relations among the nations of the chess world. In accordance with the drawing lots, the incumbent World Champion, Xiu Yuhua will play with white pieces in the first game. On August 29, 2008 the Women's World Chess Championship started in Nalchik in Hotel Sindica. The President Arsen Kanokov made the first move e2-e4 on the chess board of the Chinese World Champion, Xu Yuhua.

In the first round we have 23 matches and first victory ahived by the youngest participants, 14-year-old Hou Yifan. Most of the top seeds went through without too much difficulty, which is not surprising, since the strongest are played against the weakest in the first round. But by the first games we can noticed some surprises, as Natalia Zhukova from Ukraine lost with white pieces against Katherine Rohonyan, currently playing for the USA. The German Elisabeth Paetz in a little worse position sacrificed a figure, but after some moves she must resigned against Ilaha Kadimova. The return game Zhukova won, but the 13th seed

exciting. The German GM won the second game and a first rapid game, but Kadimova equalized. First blitz game won Paehtz, but Kadimova second time equalized. In sudden death game Paehtz with white played very aggressive and qualified into the 2nd round. None of their games were drawn.

Surprises was the elimination of Indian Women's Champion IM Tania Sachdev by Chinese player, untitled Zongyi Tan. Similarly Natasa Bojkovic of Serbia was knocked out in the tie-break games by untitled Wenjun Ju of China. After 5 draws Armenian Lilit Mkrtchian won the 2nd blitz games against Austrian Eva Moser.

Dramatic battle was in the Match between Monika Socko (Poland) and Sabina Foisor (Romania). After two draws played tie-break games. First rapid won with the black pieces Foisor, Socko equalized. First blitz game won with white won Foisor, Socko equalized. Foisor choiced for the Sudden Death game black pieces.

Both players had poor moving technics frequently tipping over and displacing pieces, they did not usually correct the position before pressing the clock. In the final phase of the games pieces were flying and the sensor board could not keep up with recording them. Foisor at one point displaced a knight, she corrected at her own time, but put it on a wrong square causing the digital board to stop the recording of moves. Socko did not protest (did not notice?) that the piece was put back incorrectly.

Foisor several times exclaim draw, but she did not stopped a clock, it was not a real claim. As the clocks were set to use a sort of Fischer mode, both clocks stopped when Foisor's flag fell. Socko had one second on her clock. Had it been a normal blitz game, Socko's flag would have been down before she could have stopped her clock.

The final position was W:Ka4,Nf4,B: Kd6,Nd5.
I, as the Chief Arbiter decided that the game is drawn.

After that Socko reached her hand to Foisor and shook hands with Foisor showing that Socke approved that she has lost the match. Then a Russian journalist interfered and said that with that material there is a position where a mate is possible. Of course, there is, but neither player can force that position. It is not enough to have "unskilled" play, but have smart, problem chess type moves to help the opponent to make a help mate.

„The game is drawn when a position is reached from which a checkmate cannot occur by any possible series of legal moves, even, with the most unskilled play.”(FIDE Laws of Chess Article 9.6)

From the first K.O. World Chess Championship (Groningen, 1997) was organised many Women's and Men's Championship, two World Cup, but never happened the same „story”. It is possible that somebody won a title of World Champion with a knight against knight, or opposite colored bishops, knight against bishops, knight against rook and many other positions? „Unskilled” play in the World Chess Championship? **This is the moment at which everybody agrees that the Regulations are not appropriate anymore and they must be changed.**

What if it wasn't Socko-Foisor, round one of the Women's World Championship, but Kramnik-Anand, final deciding game of the biggest and most prestigious title match?

Monika Socko protested against my decision and the Appels Committee decided:

„Having considered the arguments presented by the player in her protest and the decision of the Chief Arbiter, the Appeals Committee has decided that indeed based on the provisions of Article 9.6, playing in a most unskilled manner can result in the position indicated by the Chief Arbiter which can lead to a checkmate. Therefore the Appeals Committee has decided that the game is a win for white”.

The following players did not appear in Nalchik and lost by default

Sebag, Marie	FRA	2529
Chiburdanidze, Maya	GEO	2489
Krush, Irina	USA	2470
Javakhishvili, Lela	GEO	2461

Korbut, Ekaterina	RUS	2459
Lomineishvili, Maya	GEO	2414
Khurtsidze, Nino	GEO	2413
Khukhashvili, Sopiko	GEO	2408
Bosboom Lanchava, Tea	NED	2358
Gvetadze, Sopio	GEO	2355
Zapata, Karen	PER	2180

Round 1

	Name	Rtng	G1	G2	Rp1	Rp2	Bz1	Bz2	SD	Total
Round 1 Match 01										
CHN	Xu, Yuhua	2483	1	½						1.5
RSA	Solomons, Anzel	1895	0	½						0.5
Round 1 Match 02										
EGY	Alaa El Din, Yorsa	1959	0	0						0
IND	Koneru, Humpy	2622	1	1						2
Round 1 Match 03										
CHN	Hou, Yifan	2557	1	1						2
EGY	Khaled, Mona	2007	0	0						0
Round 1 Match 04										
PER	Zapata, Karen	2180	-	-						0
BUL	Stefanova, Antoaneta	2550	+	+						2
Round 1 Match 05										
SWE	Cramling, Pia	2544	1	½						1.5
VEN	Sanchez Castillo, Sarai	2202	0	½						0.5
Round 1 Match 06										
POL	Gasik, Anna	2211	+	+						2
FRA	Sebag, Marie	2529	-	-						0
Round 1 Match 07										
CHN	Zhao, Xue	2522	1	1						2
ARG	Zuriel, Marisa	2231	0	0						0
Round 1 Match 08										
UZB	Muminova, Nafisa	2242	0	0						0
RUS	Kosintseva, Tatjana	2511	1	1						2
Round 1 Match 09										
RUS	Kosteniuk, Aleksandra	2510	1	1						2
IRI	Pourkashiyan, Atousa	2269	0	0						0
Round 1 Match 10										
CRO	Golubenko, Valentina	2271	0	½						0.5
LTU	Chmilyte, Viktorija	2508	1	½						1.5
Round 1 Match 11										
SLO	Muzychuk, Anna	2504	1	1						2
BUL	Velcheva, Maria	2281	0	0						0
Round 1 Match 12										
RUS	Zakurdjaeva, Irina	2308	0	½						0.5
CHN	Ruan, Lufei	2499	1	½						1.5

Round 1 Match 13										
UKR	Zhukova, Natalia	2489	0	1	½	0				1.5
USA	Rohonyan, Katerine	2321	1	0	½	1				2.5
Round 1 Match 14										
VIE	Nguyen, Thi Thanh An	2323	+	+						2
GEO	Chiburdanidze, Maya	2489	-	-						0
Round 1 Match 15										
HUN	Hoang Thanh Trang	2487	1	½						1.5
CUB	Arribas Robaina, Matza	2323	0	½						0.5
Round 1 Match 16										
AZE	Kadimova, Ilaha	2324	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
GER	Paetz, Elisabeth	2481	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
Round 1 Match 17										
UKR	Ushenina, Anna	2476	1	½						1.5
VIE	Le Thanh Tu	2325	0	½						0.5
Round 1 Match 18										
ROM	Foisor, Sabina-Francesca	2337	½	½	1	0	1	0	0	3
POL	Socko, Monika	2473	½	½	0	1	0	1	1	4
Round 1 Match 19										
USA	Krush, Irina	2470	-	-						0
ITA	Sedina, Elena	2344	+	+						2
Round 1 Match 20										
CHN	Zhang, Jilin	2344	½	0						0.5
UKR	Gaponenko, Inna	2468	½	1						1.5
Round 1 Match 21										
GEO	Javakhishvili, Leta	2461	-	-						0
ARG	Amura, Claudia	2345	+	+						2
Round 1 Match 22										
RUS	Nebolsina, Vera	2350	0	0						0
IND	Harika, Dronavalli	2461	1	1						2
Round 1 Match 23										
RUS	Kosintseva, Nadezhda	2460	1	1						2
IND	Mohota, Nisha	2354	0	0						0
Round 1 Match 24										
GEO	Gvetadze, Sopio	2355	-	-						0
RUS	Korbut, Ekaterina	2459	-	-						0
Round 1 Match 25										
USA	Zatonskih, Anna	2446	+	+						2
NED	Bosboom Lanchava, Tea	2358	-	-						0
Round 1 Match 26										
GER	Kachiani-Gersinska, Ketino	2374	½	0						0.5
CHN	Shen, Yang	2445	½	1						1.5
Round 1 Match 27										
ARM	Mkrtchian, Lilit	2436	½	½	½	½	½	1		3.5
AUT	Moser, Eva	2383	½	½	½	½	½	0		2.5
Round 1 Match 28										
CHN	Tan, Zongyi	2387	½	1						1.5
IND	Tania, Sachdev	2432	½	0						0.5
Round 1 Match 29										
SRB	Bojkovic, Natasa	2423	½	½	½	0				1.5
CHN	Ju, Wenjun	2389	½	½	½	1				2.5
Round 1 Match 30										

MGL	Mongontuul, Bathuyang	2406	1	1						2
POL	Rajlich, Iweta	2417	0	0						0
Round 1 Match 32										
GEO	Lomineishvili, Maya	2414	-	-						0
GEO	Khukhashvili, Sopiko	2408	-	-						0
Round 1 Match 33										
RUS	Matveeva, Svetlana	2412	+	+						2
GEO	Khurtsidze, Nino	2413	-	-						0

In the second round the sensation was of course that the reigning World Women's Champion and top seed GM Xu Yuhua of China was knocked out by Russian IM Svetlana Matveeva, who was seeded 33rd in the starting field. Matveeva won the first game with the white pieces and then held the second to a draw. With a perfect score a 14-year-old Hou Yifan in the third round. Former Junior World Champion Elisabeth Paetz of Germany lost her second regular game against Anna Ushenina of Ukraine. There are, of course, the happy other winners of round two who will have a free day: Hoang Than Trang, Tatiana Kosintseva, Pia Cramling, Lilit Mrktchian, Shen Yang and Ruan Lufei.

We had 5 tie-breaks, but without any problem. After two draws in the regular games former Women's World Champion Antoaneta Stefanova won both her rapid games against Chinese Ju Wenjun. Tenth seed IM Viktorija Cmilyte of Lithuania lost her first tiebreak game against Russian IM Nadezhda Kosintseva, after both the regular games were drawn.

Junior World Champion IM Harika Dronavalli after three draws won the very complicated second tiebreak game in 91 moves. against 11th seed WGM Anna Muzychuk of Slovenia. Elena Sedina (Italy) won easy the rapid games, Inna Gaponenko with lucky the second game. Humpy Koneru and Aleksandra Kosteniuk advance directly to round 3 as they were paired against Georgians.

Round 2

	Name	Rtng	G1	G2	Rp1	Rp2	Bz1	Bz2	SD	Total
Round 2 Match 01										
RUS	Matveeva, Svetlana	2412	1	½						1.5
CHN	Xu, Yuhua	2483	0	½						0.5
Round 2 Match 02										
IND	Koneru, Humpy	2622	+	+						2
			-	-						0
Round 2 Match 03										
MGL	Mongontuul, Bathuyang	2406	0	0						0
CHN	Hou, Yifan	2557	1	1						2
Round 2 Match 04										
BUL	Stefanova, Antoaneta	2550	½	½	1	1				3
CHN	Ju, Wenjun	2389	½	½	0	0				1
Round 2 Match 05										
CHN	Tan, Zongyi	2387	½	0						0.5
SWE	Cramling, Pia	2544	½	1						1.5
Round 2 Match 06										
POL	Gasik, Anna	2211	½	0						0.5
ARM	Mkrтчian, Lilit	2436	½	1						1.5
Round 2 Match 07										
CHN	Shen, Yang	2445	1	½						1.5
CHN	Zhao, Xue	2522	0	½						0.5
Round 2 Match 08										
RUS	Kosintseva, Tatjana	2511	1	½						1.5
USA	Zatonskih, Anna	2446	0	½						0.5

Round 2 Match 09										
			-	-						0
RUS	Kosteniuk, Aleksandra	2510	+	+						2
Round 2 Match 10										
LTU	Chmilyte, Viktorija	2508	½	½	0	½				1.5
RUS	Kosintseva, Nadezhda	2460	½	½	1	½				2.5
Round 2 Match 11										
IND	Harika, Dronavalli	2461	½	½	½	1				2.5
SLO	Muzychuk, Anna	2504	½	½	½	0				1.5
Round 2 Match 12										
CHN	Ruan, Lufei	2499	½	1						1.5
ARG	Amura, Claudia	2345	½	0						0.5
Round 2 Match 13										
UKR	Gaponenko, Inna	2468	1	0	½	1				2.5
USA	Rohonyan, Katerine	2321	0	1	½	0				1.5
Round 2 Match 14										
VIE	Nguyen, Thi Thanh An	2323	½	½	0	0				1
ITA	Sedina, Elena	2344	½	½	1	1				3
Round 2 Match 15										
POL	Socko, Monika	2473	½	0						0.5
HUN	Hoang Thanh Trang	2487	½	1						1.5
Round 2 Match 16										
GER	Paecht, Elisabeth	2481	0	½						0.5
UKR	Ushenina, Anna	2476	1	½						1.5

For the quarterfinals qualified two Chinese girls, Hou and Shen, one Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Sweden and Indian players. Aleksandra Kosteniuk won Russian domestic duel against Tatiana Kosintseva, it was the black day for her sisters too. Nadezhda lost very dramatic tie-break, Shen Yang was happy after the blitz games. The reigning junior world champion Harika Dronovalli missed big chance in the first game against Armenian Lilit Mkrтчian. Svetlana Matveeva made mistakes in the time trouble. Hou Yifan easy won the tie-break games.

Round 3

	Name	Rtng	G1	G2	Rp1	Rp2	Bz1	Bz2	SD	Total
Round 3 Match 01										
RUS	Matveeva, Svetlana	2412	0	0						0
UKR	Ushenina, Anna	2476	1	1						2
Round 3 Match 02										
HUN	Hoang Thanh Trang	2487	½	0						0.5
IND	Koneru, Humpy	2622	½	1						1.5
Round 3 Match 03										
CHN	Hou Yifan	2557	1	0	1	1				3
ITA	Sedina, Elena	2344	0	1	0	0				1
Round 3 Match 04										
UKR	Gaponenko, Inna	2468	0	0						0
BUL	Stefanova, Antoaneta	2550	1	1						2
Round 3 Match 05										
SWE	Cramling, Pia	2544	1	½						1.5
CHN	Ruan, Lufei	2499	0	½						0.5
Round 3 Match 06										
IND	Harika, Dronovalli	2461	½	0						0.5
ARM	Mkrтчian, Lilit	2436	½	1						1.5

Round 3 Match 07										
CHN	Shen, Yang	2445	½	½	0	1	1	½		3.5
RUS	Kosintseva, Nadezhda	2460	½	½	1	0	0	½		2.5
Round 3 Match 08										
RUS	Kosteniuk, Aleksandra	2510	½	1						1.5
RUS	Kosintseva, Tatjana	2511	½	0						0.5

From the quarterfinals Hou Yifan, Humpy Koneru, Alexandra Kosteniuk and Pia Cramling emerged as the four semifinalists.

Aleksandra Kosteniuk played a very good game with Black pieces. She won in a sharp variation of the Nimzo-Indian defence. Kosteniuk sacrifices pawns to ruin White's structure with all Black pieces being active on the open files, Ushenina's King quickly found itself under the crossfire. Kosteniuk with a victory 25 moves to qualify to semifinals.

Humpy Koneru won 2-0 against one of the surprises of the tournament, Shen Yang.

Hou Yifan with White outplayed Armenian Lilit Mkrтчian who made a few mistakes. The veteran Sweden, Pia Cramling won her first game convincingly, but in the second she was having serious positional problems. Her opponent, Bulgarian Antoaneta Stefanova missed a few clear chances to equalize and Pia achieved a draw and advanced to the next round.

Round 4

	Name	Rtng	G1	G2	Rp1	Rp2	Bz1	Bz2	SD	Total
Round 4 Match 01										
RUS	Kosteniuk, Aleksandra	2510	½	1						1.5
UKR	Ushenina, Anna	2476	½	0						0.5
Round 4 Match 02										
IND	Koneru, Humpy	2622	1	1						2
CHN	Shen, Yang	2445	0	0						0
Round 4 Match 03										
ARM	Mkrтчian, Lilit	2436	½	0						0.5
CHN	Hou, Yifan	2557	½	1						1.5
Round 4 Match 04										
BUL	Stefanova, Antoaneta	2550	0	½						0.5
SWE	Cramling, Pia	2544	1	½						1.5

In the first day of the semifinal lower rated Hou Yifan and Aleksandra Kosteniuk used the advantage of White pieces to beat Humpy Koneru and Pia Cramling respectively. Aleksandra drew the second game to advance to the Final. The young Chinese super-talent, Hou Yifan made a big mistake in the time trouble, top seed GM Humpy Koneru equalized. Hou proved to have a better nerves. After winning the first rapid game she lost the second, but then in the blitz playoff with two wins in succession she reached the final.

Round 5

	Name	Rtng	G1	G2	Rp1	Rp2	Bz1	Bz2	SD	Total
Round 5 Match 01										
RUS	Kosteniuk, Aleksandra	2510	1	½						1.5
SWE	Cramling, Pia	2544	0	½						0.5
Round 5 Match 02										
CHN	Hou, Yifan	2557	1	0	1	0	1	1		4
IND	Koneru, Humpy	2622	0	1	0	1	0	0		2

In the first game of the Final Alexandra Kosteniuk, playing with the Black pieces, scored a very convincing victory over her Chinese opponent, 14-year-old Hou Yifan. After 17.g4?! Aleksandra played very precisely, and with spectacular attacks won the game. In the next two games we had some lessons of the rook's endings. In the second game Kosteniuk missed a win, later she had four pawns against Hou's one in a rook ending, but Hou Yifan was able to pull off a miracle save. In the third game the other Spanish game. Kosteniuk sacrificed a pawn, Hou Yifan well prepared for the battle. White made a mistake 17.Nxg6, much better was 17.Ng4. The material after 32...Rxb3 was equal, but Black had a well located bishop pair and a distant passed pawn. Then the other interesting rook ending. Black can win the game and the Title, or Black can defend the position? Hou Yifan sold the big problem, she defended perfectly. We can see very exciting last game of the Final, Kosteniuk at the end Aleksandra was winning but played it safe and drew with a perpetual check and won the Final of the Women's World Championship with a 2,5:1,5 score and became the 12th Women's World Champion.

Round 6

	Name	Rtng	G1	G2	G3	G4	Rp1	Rp2	Rp3	Rp4	Bz1	Bz2	SD	Total
Round 6 Match 01														
CHN	Hou, Yifan	2557	0	½	½	½								1.5
RUS	Kosteniuk, Aleksandra	2510	1	½	½	½								2.5

The Women's World Chess Championship 2008 in Nalchik ended with a closing ceremony where the President of Kabardino-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov and FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov awarded the winners of the Championship.

On the third place came Pia Cramling (Sweden) and Humpy Koneru (India). The youngest-ever finalist Hou Yifan (China) has been warmly greeted by the audience. The longest applause, standing ovation was given to the Champion, Aleksandra Kosteniuk from Russia. All the prizes were presented and the Champion was really crowned with a very beautiful and valuable crown, hand-made here in Kabardino-Balkaria.

The winners were greeted by speeches from the Presidents and the Champion was also congratulated by the special message of Dmitry Medvedev, President of Russia in which he appraised the performance of Aleksandra Kosteniuk and the hard work she has done to achieve such a valuable victory.

At the first moments of the ceremony, the national orchestra played traditional national music under the world-known conductor Boris Temirkanov. The second part included dance ensembles showing a wide variety of national dances to the audience.

Nalchik organised a very memorable Championship. First time in the history of the Republic Kabardino-Balkaria organised such a high level tournament. Organised perfectly, with love, enthusiastically with competence. The media follow with great attention the very interesting, exciting games. Many thanks to the fantastic team worked for the success of the Championship. Thank you to my colleagues, Mikko Markkula from Finland, Galina Strutinskaia, Vyacheslav Namruiev and Klim Manushev from Russia. Thank you to all participants for a fair-play, friendly atmosphere.

Aleksandra Kosteniuk played in a very good form, her Title well-deserved. Aleksandra is the NEW CHESS QUEEN. I hope that she will be a real Ambassador of the Women's Chess.

Aleksandra Kosteniuk: „My victory dedicate first of all, to my family – my husband and my daughter, who did not see her mom for one and a half months because of the championship! I think I will have an opportunity to make up for this time... I would like to thank everybody who supported me and believed in my victory. I felt this support and it helped me to show all my best!”

Budapest, 2008. 09. 24.

Veroci Zsuzsa
Chief Arbiter of WWCC 2008