

She Plays to Win

Be Inspired by Our Chess Queens

Lorin D'Costa

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Key to Symbols

!	a good move	±	White stands slightly better
?	a weak move	∓	Black stands slightly better
!!	an excellent move	±	White has a serious advantage
??	a blunder	∓	Black has a serious advantage
!?	an interesting move	+ -	White has a decisive advantage
?!	a dubious move	- +	Black has a decisive advantage
□	only move	→	with an attack
N	novelty	↑	with initiative
⊙	lead in development	↔	with counterplay
⊕	zugzwang	Δ	with the idea of
=	equality	△	better is
∞	unclear position	≤	worse is
⊙	with compensation for the sacrificed material	+	check
		#	mate

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Foreword

”

If we talk about pure abilities and skills, I believe there should be no reason why women cannot play as well as men

Susan Polgar

”

Being male and growing up aged 9 playing chess, I didn't pay too much attention to girls in chess. After all, when you go to your first tournaments, it is the thrill and challenge to play our royal game that we are concerned with. You also start to make your chess friends, often randomly at these competitions.

It might be that one of my first tournaments I played, the British Junior Chess Championships in Norwich in 1994, where I played 4 girls in 7 rounds (losing most of these games) that I subconsciously just assumed girls were commonplace in chess.

It was also at this tournament that my father pointed out a little girl who was holding 4 trophies she had won at the championships during the closing ceremony. She could barely hold them all at the same time.

'Look' he said to me, 'they've come from India to play here, and she's won all the titles she could have won'.

Her name was Tania Sachdev. You will study her in this book.

My older sister Emma used to (does still?) take great delight in defeating me at golf, tennis and other games and sports. She even used to play chess, until she declared age 11 'that it could be your thing'. That was very generous of her 😊.

Certainly playing for her women's football team, I saw stigma attached to this. Back in the 1990s football was seen as a 'boys thing' and these girls were trying to break this image. Why couldn't they get involved too?

As I write in 2021 we can see huge changes have been made. Women's football, amongst other sports, are very popular. In terms of chess, however, it is still unclear.

This one has confused me as I have been a full time chess coach for around 15 years. Chess is not a physical game, and hence I refer you back to the quote at the top by Susan Polgar- why on earth should girls not be playing chess as much as boys?

Whilst I do not intend to discuss that topic in length here, I believe that maybe something should be made known for these potential female chess enthusiasts; that there are role models for them to look up to, to be inspired by.

It is for this reason I am writing this book. Find your role model. This book contains games from every single female World Champion, as well as young up and comers, top seasoned professionals, streamers, and even a section at Beth Harmon from the recent famed Queen's Gambit hit show.

This book is not just for girls and women, however. Any chess player can learn from these games and discover female chess history, both from the famous players in the past right up to the present day.

How have these games been selected?

It is at this point I can mention the real reason- my UK Girls chess project called 'She Plays To Win' (SPTW).

This group has officially been going since April 11th 2020. I had the idea even a few years before, but I was not sure how it could be set up. The unfortunate events of worldwide lockdown provided the answer, as the switch to being online allowed me to offer zoom lessons for UK girls as well as weekly girls tournaments on the Lichess server. I do this for free and parents have never paid anything to get involved.

Each week I cover a top female player and we analyse the game. Over the past year I have built up a large collection of games and tactics, which I felt could be published. It is the most up to date collection about women's chess covering a variety of ages and levels.

After nearly two years, I have nearly 500 girls across the UK signed up, and a further 200 girls in our new beginners programme. I hope this is just the beginning.

After all, on our official website www.sheplaystowin.co.uk the tagline reads 'Every Girl in the UK should play and learn chess- the educational benefits are huge'.

I can announce that I personally will not take a penny from this book, as 10% of the proceeds from sales will go directly to the She Plays To Win charity in order to further the SPTW UK girls chess projects.

So not only can you benefit a lot from this book personally, your purchase will benefit UK girls chess immensely.

I'd like to thank Herman Grooten for his excellent work on editing and helping me run with the project in the latter stages, as well as Lennart Ootes, John Upham, Jos Sutmuller and all those who contributed with the photos.

Finally, I'd like to thank Daniel and Thinkers Publishing for helping to carry out this book.

I was told by a few other publishers that they would not collaborate because 'no one is interested in girl's chess'. I was therefore glad that Daniel immediately jumped at the opportunity to publish this book, and that he and his team were able to see the chance to further the huge potential there is for women's chess, not just in the UK, but around the world.

IM Lorin D'Costa
London, England
March 2022

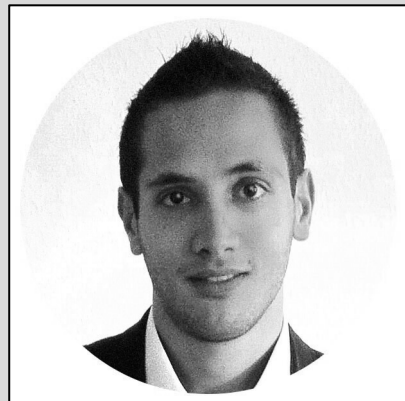
Lorin D'Costa is a 37 year old International Master, born and living in London, England.

He is the current England Women's Coach, having been with the teams at the World Chess Olympiad in 2018 and the European Team Championships in 2019 and 2021.

He is a full time chess coach in London, where amongst his successes as a coach he has won the National UK Girls Under 11 and Under 19 Schools Championships every year with his schools for the past 5 years.

He is the only coach to lead a girl's only school to the National England Under 9 and Under 11 schools finals (top 8 schools in England) including boys. He has done this for 6 consecutive years.

He is an England Junior International coach, with some of his pupils taking top 10 placing at World and European Youth Championships. On a personal level, his peak FIDE rating of 2485 (April 2009) placed him in the top 1000 in the world rankings, and he counts his best individual game as his win over Ian Nepomniachtchi, who played Magnus Carlsen for the World title in 2021.



PART I

World

Champions

Wenjun, Ju



Photo Lennart Ootes

- ❖ Born 1991, comes from Shanghai, China
- 2000 took silver medal in the World Under 10 Girls Championships
- 2009 becomes Woman Grandmaster (WGM)
- November 2014 becomes Grandmaster, the 31st woman to hold the GM title
- 2016 wins the 42nd World Chess Olympiad with China
- With China has won the Women's World Team Championships and Women's Asian Nations Chess Cup
- 2017 is the 5th woman to cross the 2600 rating barrier
- 2018 becomes the 17th Woman's World Champion, which she has defended twice
- Peak FIDE rating 2604 (March 2017)

Repertoire

White:

Mostly 1.d4

Then 1.Nf3, 1.c4

Sometimes 1.e4

Black:

1.e4 c5 Sicilian Najdorf

1.e4 e5

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 King's Indian

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 Nimzo Indian

Style

Likes fianchettoing bishop to g2 and playing positionally as White.

As Black she is happy to play the positional Nimzo as well as attacking with the King's Indian. It could be said one reason Ju is so strong is because she has developed a universal style, and can play many types of positions.

Game 1

♁ Ju, Wenjun (2571)
 ♀ Tan, Zhongyi (2522)
 🌐 Chongqing/Shanghai 2018

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♘f3 ♘f6 4. g3

The Catalan Opening is when White plays 1.d4, c4, ♘f3, g3 and fianchetto the bishop on g2. This bishop attacks towards the rook on a8. It is a safe and solid opening that can cause Black problems from nowhere if they are not careful.

4... dxc4 5. ♙g2 ♘c6

5... a6 6. 0-0 ♘c6 is the more popular way to play it. This allows for the b5 move without giving White the option of 6. ♖a4.

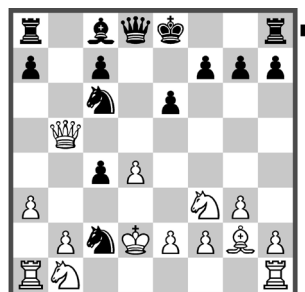
6. 0-0

6. ♖a4 it's interesting Wenjun didn't go in for this, she must have assumed her opponent was well prepared here in this sharp line 6... ♙b4+ 7. ♙d2 ♘d5 8. ♙xb4 ♘dxb4 and now:

9. a3 b5 10. ♖xb5 ♘c2+ 11. ♔d2

(see analysis diagram next column)

11... ♘xa1 [11... ♙d7 12. ♙xc2 ♘xd4+ 13. ♘xd4 ♙xb5 14. ♘xb5 ♙b8 15. ♘1c3 0-0 16. ♙hd1 ♖f6 17. ♘e4 ♖e7



Position after: 11. ♔d2

18. ♘bc3 f5 19. ♘d2 all these lines given as 0.00 by Stockfish but look very unbalanced!] 12. ♖xc6+ ♙d7 13. ♖xc4 c5;

9. 0-0 ♙b8 10. ♘c3 [10. ♘a3 0-0 11. ♖b5 b6 12. ♖xc4 ♙a6 13. ♘b5 ♖d5 14. ♖xd5 ♘xd5 15. a4] 10... a6 11. ♘e5 0-0 12. ♘xc6 ♘xc6 13. ♙xc6 bxc6 14. ♖xc4 in both cases lines are forced and no doubt Ju decided this wasn't the way to go in the match.

6... ♙b8

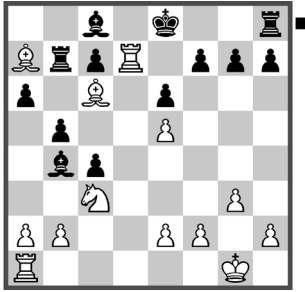
Black's last few moves were designed to play b5 and keep the extra pawn on c4. Whilst it wins a pawn, Black isn't developing and castling early. So it is a risky choice!

7. ♘c3 b5 8. ♘e5 ♘xe5

8... ♘xd4 9. e3 ♘f5 10. ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 11. ♘c6+ ♘e8 12. ♘xb8.

9. dxe5 ♘d7

9... ♖xd1 10. ♜xd1 ♘d7 11. ♙c6! puts Black under a lot of pressure. 11... a6 12. ♙e3 ♙b4 13. ♙a7 ♜b7 14. ♜xd7

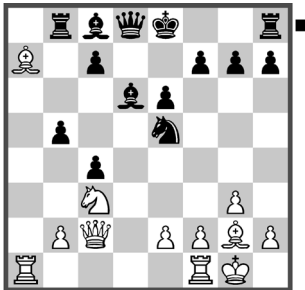


Position after: 14. ♜xd7

14... ♙xd7 15. ♙xb7.

10. ♖c2 ♙b7

10... ♘xe5 11. ♙e3 a6 12. a4 ♙d6 13. axb5 axb5 14. ♙a7



Position after: 14. ♙a7

11. ♙xb7 ♜xb7 12. ♜d1 ♙e7

It is hard to get to grips with these positions. White is a pawn down and the e5 pawn is potentially hanging soon as well. If Black can survive the passive nature of her position it can be promising for her in the long term- but that's a big if!

12... ♖c8 is the most popular move, getting out of the pin. 13. ♘e4 ♘xe5 14. b3 f5 15. ♙b2 ♘c6 16. ♘d2 with a Catalan mess; Kozul – A.Saric, Zagreb 2016.

13. ♖e4 ♖c8

13... ♜b6 14. ♖g4 0-0 15. ♙h6 g6 16. ♙xf8 ♙xf8 17. ♖d4

14. ♖g4



Position after: 14. ♖g4

14... g5

14... 0-0 15. ♙h6 g6 16. ♙xf8 ♙xf8 17. ♖f4 ♖f4 sacrifices the exchange but is probably not that good for Black as her coordination is fairly poor;

14... g6 looked much more normal. 15. ♙h6 ♘xe5 16. ♖f4 ♘d7 17. ♙g7 ♜g8 18. ♖h6 looks very risky for Black;

14... ♙f8 our engine says keep hold of the pawn like this, but it is so anti-human to undevelop like this 15. ♙f4!

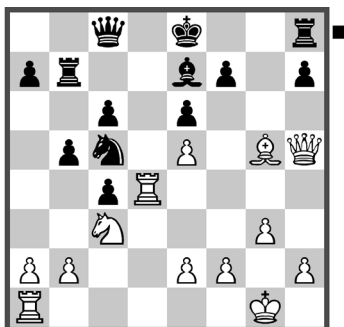
15. ♖h5

15. ♖xg5 ♜g8 16. h4 h6 wins the bishop, though even here White has a good position after 17. ♜xd7 ♚xd7 18. ♚e4 c6 19. ♚h7 ♜f8 20. ♖xh6.

15... ♘c5

15... ♘xe5 16. ♘e4 h6 17. ♖xg5 ♖xg5 18. ♘xg5 ♚e7 19. ♘e4 the king on e7 in the long run shouldn't be able to be safe here.

16. ♖xg5 c6 17. ♜d4



Position after: 17. ♜d4

Black's big problem is they haven't castled, so the king is weak and the rook on h8 cannot get into the game.

17... ♜d7 18. ♖xe7 ♚xe7 19. ♚h4+ ♚e8 20. ♜ad1 ♚d8 21. ♚f4

21. ♚xd8+ normally don't exchange off queens when you are attacking, but here there is a tactical reason she could do so; 21... ♚xd8 22. ♘e4! wins the knight on c5.

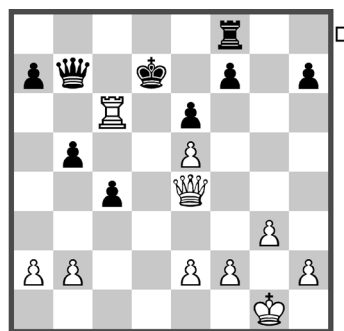
21... ♜xd4 22. ♜xd4 ♚b6 23. ♜d6 ♜f8

23... ♚e7 24. ♚f6+ wins the rook on h8.

24. ♘e4

24. ♚f3 attacking c6 is also good.

24... ♘xe4 25. ♚xe4 ♚b7 26. ♜xc6 ♚d7



Position after: 26... ♚d7

Black is trying to wriggle out, but precise play from Wenjun Ju will prevent this.

27. ♚d4+!

27... ♚xc6 (27... ♚e8 28. ♚c5 ♚d7 29. ♜c8+ wins) 28. ♚d6#.

1-0