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Chess is moving with the times

The greatest chess players of the last 50 years have spent the weekend in Zurich, playing matches against members of the public and each other in the main hall of Zurich train station. The tournaments mark the 200th anniversary of the Zurich Chess Club—the oldest chess club in the world. Our Zurich correspondent Vincent Landon has more:

— [Vincent Landon](#), World Radio Switzerland



Crowds watch as chess master and world champion Viswanathan Anand from India, right, talks with Grandmaster Judit Polgar of Hungary at the Zurich main station on Sunday. (KEYSTONE / Patrick B. Kraemer)

A fanfare fit for kings, queens, bishops and pawns as the chess champions of the past 50 years took on 25 challengers each in the cavernous concourse of Zurich train station.

What a roll-call it was: reigning world champion Vishi Anand, joined by his predecessors, including Anatoly Karpov, Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik and Boris Spassky. Anand says chess is moving with the times:

ANAND: "I would say it is younger and faster. Obviously the average age of the top players is going down. I mean we always had prodigies in chess but they tend to peak much faster as well. And here I think we can see the role of computers. We can also see the role of computers in the other thing where chess seems to go faster. There are more tournaments played and if you have an idea, you can use it once maybe but in a week everybody has already worked it out whereas that ability to handle information was much slower before."

On Saturday it was enthusiasts pitting their wits against the top players in the game—the best against the rest. But the best clashed head to head on Sunday in a rapid tournament. One new face was was Judit Polgar, the best female player in chess history.

POLGAR: "More women are coming into the sport who are taking it more seriously than before—girls from China. There are a couple of them who are really good. Also from India, they take it also as a profession and obviously if you spend more time and the attitude is professional, then the results come with it."



Crowds watch the chess masters in action at the Zurich main station on Sunday.
(KEYSTONE / Patrick B. Kraemer)

Amid the fanfare, easy to forget that some of these players have been bitter, bitter rivals, on and off the board. The clashes of Cold War warriors Korchnoi and Karpov are the stuff of legend. Here's Karpov reminiscing on one of his toughest matches:

KARPOV: "The longest game I played against Korchnoi in 1978. I think it was 124 moves so this was a game of sixteen and a half hours. I succeeded to defend a very difficult position so it was a draw at the end."

And the draw of the game continues to fascinate champions and amateurs alike.

ANAND: "For me it is simply that after all these years, there is still so much to learn. For me, that's the most fascinating thing that the mysteries never seem to end."

That's perhaps why, whatever their differences, all the chess greats were on board for the jubilee festivities of the oldest chess club in the world.