

## Grandmaster Profile

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**T**oday we would like to introduce to you Grandmaster Ruslan Ponomarev from the Ukraine. I first met Ruslan about 5 years ago, when he was only 11. He struck me as a very serious boy, with a burning desire to learn more about chess. I thought that this guy would become really strong very soon. Yet, I was still surprised when just 3 years later he became the youngest GM in the World. Since then he lost that "title" to Chinese GM Bu, but instead made his mark in the top chess events: he played in Elista in 1996 for the Ukraine and competed in the FIDE World Championship in Las Vegas last year. Recently he shared a victory in the Faeroes Islands Open with an incredible 7½ points out of 9 and 2823 rating performance. His co-winner was another young star – GM Alexander Grischuk from Moscow. When the event in Torshavn was over, I interviewed both winners and here I would like to present my interview with Ruslan, conducted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October.

### ***What are your impressions of the tournament?***

I had a good result and was happy with my play, apart from one game which I played badly - against Grischuk.

### ***What are your nearest plans? I heard that your rating is rising and perhaps you can add even more points soon. So, what's your next tournament?***

I will play in the Olympiad and then in the World Championship in India.

### ***How do you evaluate the chances of the Ukrainian team in Istanbul?***

We have a good mixture of young and experienced players on the team and will be fighting for the medals.

### ***What do you think of the present situation in chess?***

I wish we would have one strong organisation, with which all leading players would co-operate. That could attract sponsors and make chess more professional.

### ***This is a rather idealistic view, but what would you do right now to improve the image of chess, should you have the power?***

I would have shortened the time control and arranged live translation of games over the Net, explaining them to the general public. Ideally chess should be on TV too.

### ***So, it sounds that you are not too interested in finding the absolute chess 'truth' - like finding the best move in the Gruenfeld Defence... :-)***

Right now I am interested in the sporting aspect of chess. When players grow old, they may get more interested in searching for "chess truth".

### ***At what age do chess players become old, in your opinion?***

I think that after 30 your results go down - you must show your best before. The current trend confirms this - players become Grandmasters very young now. ***So, do you think that soon we may have an 11-year old GM?***

Maybe, particularly as the title gets devalued. We may need a special title. Right now Kasparov is a GM and I am a GM! This is not the same...

### ***:-) Maybe right now this is not the same, but you are too critical of yourself! Who is the World Champion in chess now?***

Kasparov, though he is losing to Kramnik now. Khalifman is the FIDE World champion.

***Do you think that it's fair that Kasparov did not defend his title for 5 years?***

This is not fair and we need a system, which would allow people to challenge the champion. The rating system must be changed too - if somebody does not play for a long time (like Kamsky a few years ago), then he must lose rating points.

***Who is your all-time favourite player?***

Alekhine - he was most creative!

***Whom do you like among modern players?***

It's hard to tell - sometimes you can't say where their creativity begins and computer analysis ends!

***Some people say that your style resembles that of Karpov. Do you agree?***

Both Karpov and I make lots of technical mistakes, letting our opponents to escape - maybe this is why people say that our styles are similar!

***:-) Do you think that there is a difference between chess elite and other GMs?***

Of course there is a difference – elite GMs are tougher and harder to beat.

***Do your parents support your interest in chess?***

Yes.

***Do you believe that chess could be a good profession?***

I hope it will become a good profession - it would be a great pity otherwise.

***Do you use computers and the Internet?***

Yes, though I got connected to the Net only a few months ago.

***Do you play chess online?***

So far I played only 5 games on the ICC.

***What are your favourite chess sites?***

[www.kasparovchess.com](http://www.kasparovchess.com) (Kasparov Chess) and [www.ruschess.com](http://www.ruschess.com) (Shahcom).

***Is chess still as popular in the Ukraine, as it used to be?***

There are far more prestigious professions now, but chess is popular.

***What will you do after the World Championships?***

I will play a match (8 games) against Victor Korchnoi in Donetsk, beginning in early January.

***Who is sponsoring the match?***

My sponsors - company Danko.

***Ruslan, thank you very much for the interview and good luck in Istanbul!***

As you may know, in Istanbul the Ukraine finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. Ponomariov won a gold medal on board 2 with a 2785 rating performance. His current rating is about 2680, so it will be interesting how Ruslan will do in New Delhi. Ponomariov has his own Web site:

<http://chess-sector.odessa.ua/ruslan.html>

## **Annotated Game**

**Ruslan Ponomariov (2630)**

**– Stuart Conquest (2529)**

Torshavn 2000

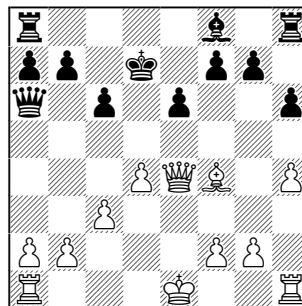
Notes by GM Alex Baburin

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 dxe4 4 ♗xe4 ♕f5  
5 ♗g3 ♕g6 6 h4 h6 7 ♖f3 ♖f6 8 ♗e5 ♕h7  
9 ♕d3 ♕xd3 10 ♖xd3 e6 11 ♕f4 ♖a5+  
12 c3 ♖a6 13 ♗e4!?

This looks like a novelty. In the game Topalov–Leko, Tilburg 1998, White played 13 ♖f3 ♗bd7 14 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 15 ♕e5 ♕e7 16 b3. Perhaps, now Black

had to play 13...♖xd3 14 ♗xf6+ gxf6 15 ♗xd3 h5, though even then White would be slightly better

13...♗xe4 14 ♖xe4 ♗d7 15 ♗xd7 ♕xd7



White has more space, which gives him some advantage. It is instructive how Ponomarev builds up his position:

16 ♖h3! ♜c8 17 ♕e5! ♜c4 18 ♖f3 f6 19 ♕g3 f5 20 ♜c2 g5?!

I think that better was to play ...♜e8 at some point and then evacuate the king to c8.

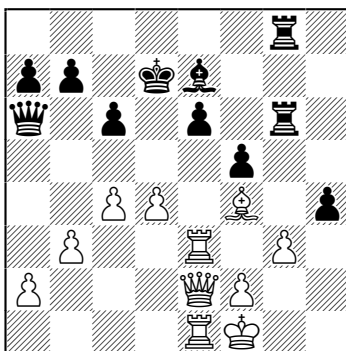
21 ♕e5 ♖g8 22 b3 ♜d5 23 c4 ♜a5+ 24 ♔f1 ♕e7 25 hxg5 ♖xg5

After 25...hxg5 White's rook would come back to the h-file – 26 ♖h3!.

26 ♖d1 h5 27 ♜e2 ♜a6 28 ♕f4!

A very deep move – this bishop only looked good on e5, but it lacked any useful role there. Relocating the bishop, White prepares to put pressure on the e6-pawn.

28...♖g6 29 ♜e3 ♖cg8 30 g3 h4 31 ♜e1



Black's position is cracking, as he cannot hold the e6-pawn. Tactical defence fails:

31...♕b4 32 ♖xe6! ♕xe1 33 ♜e7+ ♔d8 34 ♕c7+ ♔c8 35 ♜e5!

White calmly finishes his attack.

35...b5 36 ♕d8! ♕a5 37 ♖c7+ ♔b8 38 ♖xc6+ 1-0

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#### Recommended links.

<http://chess-sector.odessa.ua/ruslan.html>

[www.kasparovchess.com](http://www.kasparovchess.com)

[www.ruschess.com](http://www.ruschess.com)

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