

 Pachman, Luděk (11.05.1924 - 06.03.2003)



Czech IM (1950) and Grandmaster (1954), leading opening theorist and author of 80 books and a journalist who was living later in West Germany. Editor of the FIDE magazine from the late 1950s to the mid 1960s. Born in the small Czech town of Bela pod Bezdezem, Luděk Pachman went on to become one of the leading players of his generation. He honed his chess skills in Prague during World War II under the expert tutelage of World Champion Alexander Alekhine. Pachman's first serious event at the age of 19 was the 1943 Prague tournament, won by Alekhine.

Seven times Czechoslovakian Champion in 1946, 1953, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1963 and 1966. Pachman won also (West) German Championship in 1978

Winner at **Arbon SASB 1946** (shared with Yanovsky (best tie-break), and Opocensky, ahead of 4. O'Kelly) and **Arbon SASB 1949** (ahead of Wade), **Bucharest 1949**, **Mar del Plata GM 1959** (together with Miguel Najdorf, ahead of joint 3./4. Bobby Fischer and Borislav Ivkov), **Santiago de Chile 1959** (shared with Ivkov, ahead of 3. Pilnik, 4.-7. Sanchez, Sanguineti, and Fischer):

- Fischer and Pachman were sparring with each others' opening preparation for the Santiago. The amicable pair had toured just a couple of weeks previously, after the Mar del Plata 1959 tournament wrapped up to enjoy a short vacation.

Lima, Peru 1959 (shared again with Ivkov), **Sarajevo (Bosna) 1960** (shared with Stojan Puc who had won the inaugural event at Sarajevo in 1957, twelve players including 8./9. Bent Larsen, Vasja Pirc) and **Sarajevo (Bosna) 1961** (shared with Svetozar Gligoric), **Marianske Lazne 1960**, **Graz, Austria 1961**, **Athens (Acropolis, first event of the series) 1968**, and **Reggio Emilia 1975-76**.

He won about fifteen major international chess tournaments, *but considered sharing second place in [Havana 1963](#), with [Mikhail Tal](#) and [Efim Geller](#), behind [Viktor Korchnoi](#), his best result.*

- The most successful year of his career was certainly in 1959. After winning the Czechoslovakian championship, he went on a **South American tour**, (co-)winning international invitation tournaments in Mar del Plata, Santiago de Chile, and Lima.

Pachman won also three strong Zonal tournaments in a row, always as clear first: **1951 Marianske Lazne** ahead of Szabo, Barcza, Stoltz, Foltys, Benkő, etc., **1954 Marianske Lazne & Prague**, ahead of Szabo, Sliwa, Filip, Stahlberg, Olafsson, Lundin, etc., **1957 Dublin**, 1.5 points ahead of Gligoric, Benkő, Schmid, C.H.O'D. Alexander, etc., and *competed in in six Interzonals* between Saltsjöbaden 1948 and Manila 1976, narrowly missing a spot for the Candidate's twice:

>> In 1955, at the Interzonal tournament in Gothenburg (it was a 21-player round robin, with the top nine players qualifying for the Amsterdam Candidate's in 1956), Ludek Pachman already was missing a possible play-off spot to advance only by half a point. The winner was **<Bronstein>** with 15/20 (an impressive +10 =10 -0), **<Keres>** was sole second with 13.5, **<Panno>** was clear third at 13, followed by **<Petrosian>** 12.5, **<Geller>** and **<Szabo>** each had 12 and the other qualifiers were **<Filip>**, **<Pilnik>** and **<Spassky>** with 11.

Just missing out with 10.5 were Ilivitsky and Pachman, they even played a reserve playoff match for the gallery: **Prague Candidates Reserve Playoff (1956)**, a match he narrowly lost.

The match arose from the [Gothenburg Interzonal \(1955\)](#) where Ilivitsky (34) and Pachman (31) both scored +1, and shared 10-11th places. Then FIDE decided that this tie had to be resolved. If one of the players in [Amsterdam Candidates \(1956\)](#) had withdrawn, the winner of this match would have taken his place. In the end, no substitutes were to be required.

Pachman became a leading European GM. Ilivitsky's triumph faded away quickly. He did not qualify for the USSR Championship 1956, coming ninth in the semifinal, and was not to play in any important international tournament outside of the Soviet Union.

>> In 1958, at the Interzonal in Portoroz, Yugoslavia (Slovenia), Pachman missed a possible play-off spot for the Candidate's only by half a point: the tournament was won by young and meteoric rising <Tal> with 13.5/20, <Gligoric> was second with 13, followed by <Benko> and <Petrosian> with 12.5, then <Olafsson> and <Fischer> (who was on friendly terms with Pachman these days) both with 12.0 points (all six players qualified to join <Smyslov> and <Keres> for the Candidate tournament in 1959 of the best eight players to determine the Challenger of reigning Champion Botvinnik in 1960).

Ludek Pachman finished this Interzonal with 11.5 points, shared with Bronstein, the unlucky World Champion Challenger from 1951, Averbakh, Matanovic (the only player to beat Tal), and Szabo. Panno and Filip followed at 11.0 points. Great Larsen, already a GM since 1956, finished as sole 16th (meanwhile his Scandinavian compatriot, then IM Olafsson advanced). It was a very close contest in a strong field: <http://soloscacchi.altervista.org/w...>, in total 21 participants; at that time, there was only one Interzonal tournament per three-year-cycle.

Pachman participated in eight consecutive Olympiads from 1952 until 1966 for Czechoslovakia, usually playing first board, and again in 1976 for West Germany.

In 1962 he coached in Cuba and in 1967 he was sent to coach in Puerto Rico.



Pachman and Fidel Castro (ChessBase)

Politics always played a major role in Pachman's life and interrupted his chess career several times. He was a passionate speaker and writer whatever cause he defended:

Politically active throughout his life, first as a devoted Communist, **he became a supporter of Alexander Dubček and the Prague Spring movement.** In December 1968, Pachman won a tournament in Athens. Upon his return to Prague, the authorities arrested, imprisoned, and tortured him for months, following the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. During this time he attempted suicide: On Christmas Eve 1969, doctors called his wife and told her that he probably would not survive the night. Pachman was later released, but then rearrested again.

In 1972, Luděk Pachman was finally allowed to emigrate to West Germany. he developed into one of the most vociferous émigré critics of the puppet Communist Government in Czechoslovakia and became known as a strongly anti-Communist political activist. His eloquence made him a regular guest on political talk shows. He loved to argue and sometimes changed his mind about people.



Grandmaster Pachman and Grandmaster Donner in political discussion with presenter Hans Jacobs, Hilversum, The Netherlands 1972. Photo: ANP

Pachman was also member of the **Charter 77** (*Charta 77* in [Czech](#) and in [Slovak](#)) was an informal civic initiative in [communist Czechoslovakia](#) from 1976 to 1992, named after the document Charter 77 from January 1977. After the [Velvet Revolution](#) in November 1989, many of its members played important roles in Czech and Slovak politics, Luděk Pachman was rehabilitated and acquired back the Czechoslovakian citizenship, but in 1998, being disillusioned with the Czech government, he gave it back and settled in Passau, Germany (spelled as “Pachmann”).

After his emigration, Pachman had been boycotted by the Soviet Union and most East European countries. His public disinvitation at the strong international chess tournament in Solingen, West Germany, in 1974 caused an upset: Boris Spassky, Lev Polugaevsky and Wolfgang Uhlmann got the order to withdraw if Ludek Pachman plays, the organisers then kicked Pachman out, with the expression of regret: <https://www.zeit.de/1974/30/der-ausdruck-des-bedauerns> (DIE ZEIT).

The end of boycott

In 1975, Pachman qualified once again for a world championship zonal tournament, this time held in Barcelona. After his departure from Czechoslovakia, East European chess federations had done their utmost to continue damaging his career, and they now used the bullying tactic of threatening a total Eastern European boycott if he took up his place.

But the Spanish organisers and the World Chess Federation FIDE stood their ground. Pachman's invitation remained and it was the communist players who suffered now, by being deliberately excluded from the event. As it was, he went on to qualify, and his presence in the 1976 Manila Interzonal contest obliged the communist federations to abandon their boycott, since to have withdrawn en masse from this advanced stage of the world championship would have been a considerable political setback.

<http://www.mark-weeks.com/chess/zonals/1975-78.htm> (Mark Weeks)

<http://worldchesschampionship.blogspot.ch/2014/07/zt-1975-barcelona-1976-arandjelovac.html>

<http://worldchesschampionship.blogspot.ch/2014/08/zt-1975-barcelona-1976-arandjelovac-ii.html>

After the Velvet revolution in November 1989, Pachman acquired back the Czechoslovakian citizenship, but in 1998, being disillusioned with the Czech government, he gave it back and settled in Passau, Germany.

Since 1946 he was married with Eugenie Pachman (1925–2011). They had no children.

Pachman was a very prolific author, too, publishing eighty books in five languages. In the 1950s, **he became the world's leading opening expert with the publication of his four-volume opus, *Theory of Modern Chess***. Pachman considered *Modern Chess Strategy* (first published in 1959), to be his best book. His book *Checkmate in Prague (The Memoirs of a Grandmaster)* recounts his treatment at the hands of the Communist authorities.

Famous books (selection): *Modern Chess Strategy* (1959), *Queen's Gambit and other Close Games* (1963), *Pachman Decisive Games* (1975), *Complete Chess Strategy, Volume 1: First Principles of the Middle Game* (1975), *Complete Chess Strategy, Volume 2: Principles of Pawn Play and the Center* (1976), *Chess Endings for the Practical Player* (1983) or in german language: *Schach WM '78. Kortschnoi / Karpov. Mit V. Kortschnoi, Hübner / Kortschnoi. Finale in Meran* and *Kortschnoi / Karpov. Entscheidung in Meran WM '81* (all from the Walter Rau Verlag).

Best ELO: 2520 in 1976. His peak ranking was #14 in October 1959 (SONAS ELO, according to historical chessmetrics data). Pachman was a solid player around the top twenty during the 1950s, and consistently a top fifty player of the world (today labelled as supergrandmaster) from 1947 to 1967, in a period when the top ten was heavily 'occupied' by players from the Soviet Union.



Ludek Pachmann, 1943 (Courtesy of ChessBase)

Famous games:

Pachman, Ludek - Fischer, Robert James

Santiago Santiago (6), 1959

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.d4 d5 4.e3 Nc6 5.Nc3 Bb4 6.Bd2 O-O 7.a3 Bxc3 8.Bxc3 Ne4 9.Qc2 a5 10.b3 b6 11.Bb2 Ba6 12.Bd3 f5 13.Rc1 Rc8 14.O-O Rf6 15.Rfd1 Rh6 16.Bf1 g5 17.cxd5 g4 18.Bxa6 gxf3 19.gxf3 Qg5+ 20.Kf1 Rxh2 21.fxe4 Rf8 22.e5 f4 23.e4 f3 24.Ke1 Qg1+ 25.Kd2 Qxf2+ 26.Kc3 Qg3 27.Qd3 exd5 28.Rg1 Rg2 29.Rxg2 Qxg2 30.Qf1 dxe4 31.Qxg2+ fxg2 32.Rg1 Rf2 33.Bc4+ Kf8 34.Bd5 Rf3+ 35.Kc4 b5+ 36.Kc5 Ne7 37.Rxg2 Nxd5 38.Kxd5 Rxb3 39.Kxe4 b4 40.axb4 axb4 1-0. → Replay: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1044493>

Pachman, Ludek vs. Neikirch, Oleg (Portoroz, Interzonal 1958) 1-0.

→ Replay: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1104888>

Pachman attacks his opponent's castled king, offering the sacrifice of both bishops. His opponent declines the second bishop, and could have continued the game with 25...Qh7!, but it is not easy to find such moves over the board in the limited time. Pachman was a good practical player and knew well where it pays to take a risk in the game.

Gallery CNC



Pachman is one of the very few chess players who had an even score against Fischer (+2-2=4).

Sources:

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<http://en.chessbase.com/post/grandmaster-ludek-pachman-dies-at-78> (Obituary, Frederic Friedel, including memoirs by Ludek Pachman from his book *Checkmate in Prague*)

<http://www.uschess.org/obituaries/pachman.php> (Obituary, John Henderson)

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