

 **Portisch Lajos** (04.04.1937)



Hungarian GM (in 1961), **one of the absolute best chess players during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s**. A hard-working, modest, talented, and a first class sportsman. His main hobby is singing operatic arias, having a fine baritone voice, a quality shared by Vasily Smyslov, and subsequently devoting most of his time to music after finishing his professional chess career.

**Nine times National Hungarian Champion:**

**February 1958, December 1958, 1961, 1962, 1964, December 1965, 1971, 1975 and 1981**

A member of **twenty Hungarian Olympiad teams between 1956 and 2000** (board one 1962-88) where he won all in all **eleven Olympiad medals** (team and individual points or performance).

**Portisch also played on board one** for his team (together with Ribli, Sax, Adorjan, Csom, Vadasz) **surpassing the USSR to win the Gold medal for Hungary at the 1978 Olympiad in Buenos Aires**, and, what is often forgotten, shared first place at the next Olympiad in 1980 held in Malta (USSR winning on tie-break over Hungary with Portisch, Ribli, Sax, Csom, Farago, Pinter).

Portisch has also represented Hungary at eight European Team Championships, winning a total of 14 medals ! (individual and team all together). Portisch played again board one for Hungary at the inaugural World Team Championship in Lucerne 1985 as Hungary won the team silver medals.

Portisch learned to play chess at an early age, the game being played often in his family. Lajos steadily progressed over the years. **He first made a name in 1958**, when he won twice a national Hungarian championships as well as an international tournament, becoming an IM by FIDE, too.

**Apart from national championships and (inter)zonals**, he played in about 75 strong events from the 1950 to the 1990s, **winning or sharing about 25 first prizes in elite tournaments**: **Budapest (Alekhine Memorial) 1956**, equal with Benkő (all players from Hungary; Benkő emigrated soon afterwards to the United States), **Balatonfüred (1<sup>st</sup> Asztalos Memorial) 1958**, ahead of 2. Tolush, 3./4. Szabo, Bilek); **San Benedetto del Tronto 1960**; **Sarajevo Bosna 1962**, shared with Gligoric; **Sarajevo Bosna 1963**; **Amsterdam-IBM 1963**; **Hoogovens Beverwijk 1965**, shared with Geller; **Amsterdam-IBM 1967**; **Skopje-Ohrid 1968**, above Geller and Polugaevsky; **Monte Carlo 1969**, equal with Smyslov; **Amsterdam-IBM 1969**; **Hastings 1969-1970** (unbeaten ahead of 2. Unzicker, 3. Gligoric, 4. Smyslov, 5. Timman), and **Hastings 1970-1971** (unbeaten, ahead of 2.-6. Uhlmann, Markland, Hort, Gligoric, Krogius); **Adelaide 1971**; **Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee 1972**; **Las Palmas 1972** (inaugural edition), above runners-up Larsen, Smyslov, followed by Bronstein; **San Antonio, USA 1972**, Portisch best on tie-break, shared with Karpov and Petrosian, then 4. Gligoric, 5. Keres; **Ljubljana / Portoroz (Vidmar Memorial) 1973**; **Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee 1975**, ahead of Hort; **Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee 1978** (fourth win!), ahead of Korchnoi; **Tilburg 1978**, above Timman, incl. Spassky, Hübner, Hort, Larsen, Ljubojevic, Miles, etc.; **Reggio Emilia 1984-85**; **Portoroz / Ljubljana (Vidmar Memorial) 1985**, shared with Miles and Ribli; **Sarajevo Bosna 1986**, shared with Georgiev and Psakhis (5. Spassky); **Reggio Emilia B-group 1991-92**; **Cannes Festival des Jeux (Open) 1992**, clear first (incl. Lobreton, Spraggett, Minasian, last USSR champ in Nov 1991); **Reggio Emilia 1993-94**; **Jakarta (Gunadarma GM) 1996**, a fine win in his later years, ahead of 2.-4. Adianto, Krasenkow, Torre, 5.-7. Ftacnik, M. Gurevich, I. Sokolov, ten players, 7 Top 100.

Note: In Milano 1975, Lajos Portisch won the round robin – the four best players advanced into semifinals (Portisch beat Ljubojevic 2.5-1.5, Karpov and Petrosian drew 2-2 (=4), with Karpov advancing), Lajos Portisch lost then the final match against World Champion Anatoly Karpov.

**Lajos Portisch has been a Candidate a total of eight times !**, although he has never become the official Challenger or reached the Candidate's final match stage (Portisch was twice semi-finalist).

*Portisch played famous Candidate's matches, vs. Spassky (twice, a win on tie-break, and a loss), Larsen (twice, a win and a loss), Vaganian (won), Tal, Petrosian, Korchnoi, Timman, and Hübner.*

**Portisch played in twelve consecutive (!!) Interzonal cycles from 1962 to 1993, qualifying eight times for the World Championship Candidate's**, namely IZT 1964, 1967, 1973, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1987, missing the qualification for the Candidate's only in the Interzonals 1962, 1970, 1990 (swiss), 1993 (swiss).

Winner of the **Interzonal Rio de Janeiro 1979** (joint with Petrosian and Hübner). Winner of the **Interzonal Toluca 1982** (joint with Torre), *he was joint second at the Interzonal Petropolis 1973 (Mecking won), and joint second at the Interzonal Biel 1976 (Larsen won).*

Plus winning **Zonal at Madrid 1960** (joint with Pomar, Gligoric, Donner, the latter eliminated in the play-off for three spots), winning the **Zonal at Halle 1963** (ahead of Larsen, then joint Ivkov, Robatsch) and winning the **Zonal at Halle 1967** (ahead of Hort, then joint Uhlmann, Matulovic).

Best ranking of GM Lajos Portisch: **=2<sup>nd</sup> of the world, together with Korchnoi, behind Karpov in 1981 (January-June list)** at Elo 2650. Best rating: **Elo 2655** in 1980 (January-December list), then as 4<sup>th</sup> of the world.

Lajos Portisch lives in Hungary. His younger brother is [Ferenc Portisch](#).



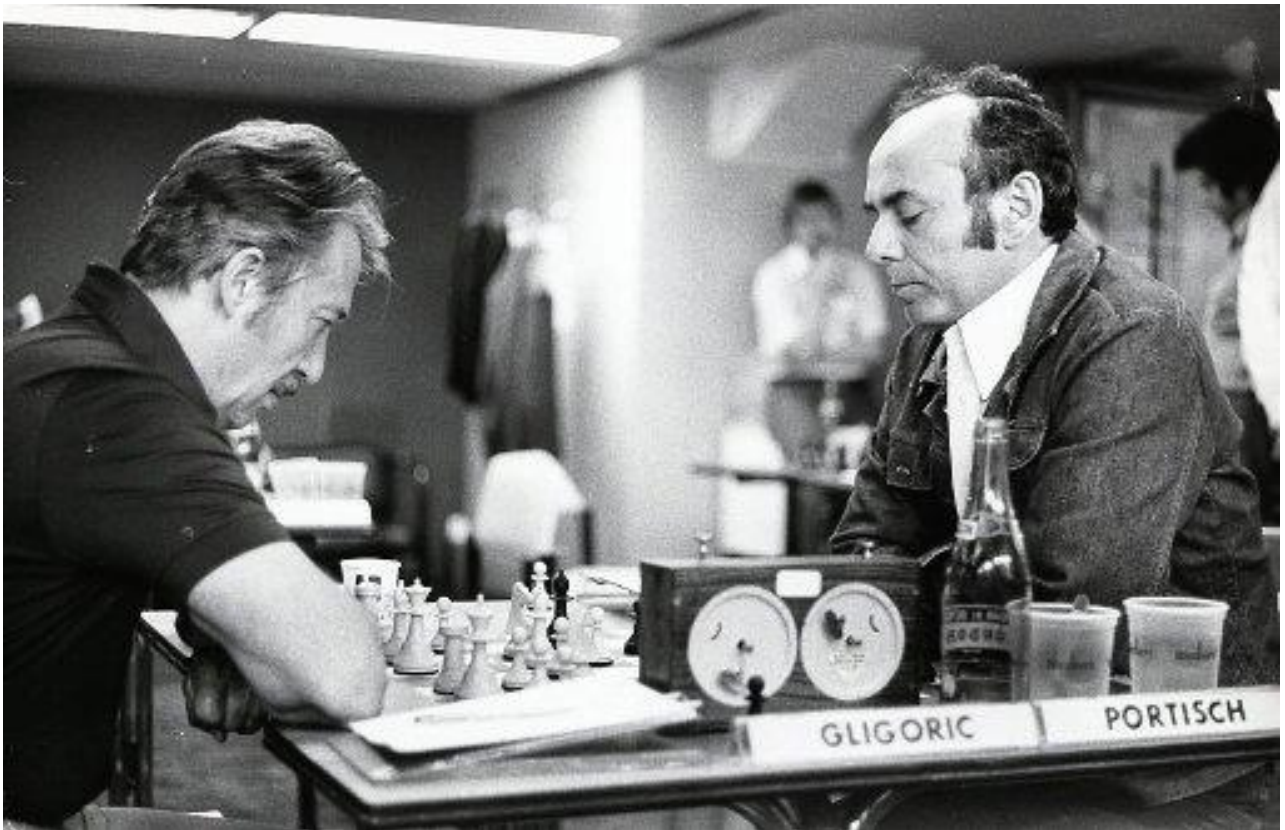
**IM Ferenc Portisch (\*1939), the younger brother of GM Lajos Portisch (\*1937) (Photos: Anefo)**



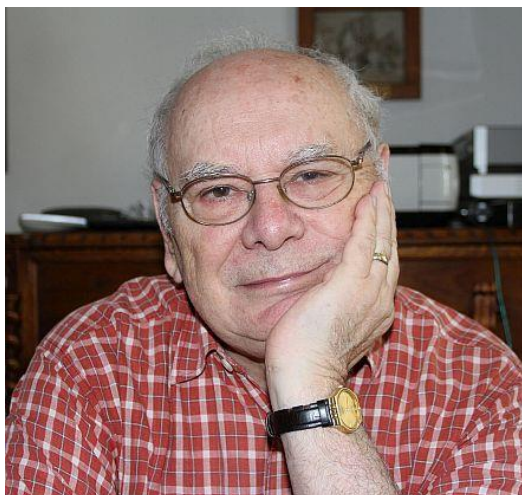


**Handshake between Bent Larsen (born 1935) and Lajos Portisch (born 1937) in Rotterdam in 1977, at Candidates Quarter-Final, Portisch won that match and advanced** (Photo: Hans Peters, Anefo). Note: Larsen had won their Candidates Quarter-Final in 1968. In lifetime overall scores, Portisch has a clear plus.

**Portisch has beaten six World Champions in classical chess: Smyslov, Tal, Petrosian, Spassky, Karpov, & Anand, virtually all stars of his time, Korchnoi, Keres, Geller, Polugaevsky, Beliavsky, Larsen, Miles, Short, Hübner, Timman, Najdorf, Reshevsky, Ljubojevic, Gligoric, Hort, Szabo, etc.**



**Gligoric vs. Portisch, Buenos Aires Chess Olympiad '78** (Photo: Axel Ornstein)



(Photo: SK Dinkelsbühl)

Lajos Portisch in 2018: A well-rounded life

## Notable chess games

- **Lajos Portisch vs László Szabó**, Budapest 1958, Grunfeld Defence, Exchange Variation (D85), 1-0. The experienced Szabó, 20 years older, tries the unusual knight retreat to b6, perhaps hoping to confuse young Portisch, but it backfires.
- **Lajos Portisch vs Svetozar Gligorić**, Madrid Zonal 1960, King's Indian Defence, Orthodox Variation (E99), 1-0. In a very heavily analyzed line, one of the veteran Gligoric's favourites, Portisch proves he has the knowledge to prevail.
- **Lajos Portisch vs Leonid Stein**, Amsterdam Interzonal 1964, Benoni Defence (A56), 1–0. In a vital game for eventual qualification, Portisch takes out the National Soviet champion.
- **Lajos Portisch vs Tigran Petrosian**, Moscow 1967, Slav Defence, Exchange Variation (D10), 1-0. Although not really considered a tactician, Portisch proves here in a quiet opening variation that not even the World Champion can be proof against his attacking skills.
- **Bent Larsen vs Lajos Portisch**, Porec Candidates' match 1968, game 4, Queen's Gambit Declined, Orthodox Variation (D61), 0-1. Portisch grinds out a hard-fought win.
- **Lajos Portisch vs David Bronstein**, Monte Carlo 1969, Queen's Gambit, Symmetrical Defence (D06), 1-0. Inventive Bronstein pushes the boundaries too far in this game, and pays the price.
- **Vasily Smyslov vs Lajos Portisch**, Portorož Candidates' Reserve match 1971, game 4, Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation (B92), 0-1. Ex-World Champion Smyslov did not lose very often with the White pieces, but Portisch turns the trick here.
- **Lajos Portisch vs Anatoly Karpov**, San Antonio 1972, Nimzo-Indian Defence, Rubinstein / Gligoric Variation (E55), 1-0. Karpov would ascend to the World Chess Champion's throne less than three years later.
- **Mikhail Tal vs Lajos Portisch**, Varese Candidates' Playoff 1976 after the Interzonal at Biel, Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation, Poisoned Pawn (B97), 0-1. A highly complex game.
- **Boris Spassky vs Lajos Portisch**, Mexico Candidates' match 1980, game 1, Sicilian Defence, Closed Variation (B25), 0-1. Another revenge tilt sees Portisch open the match by turning back one of Spassky's favourite systems.
- **Anthony Miles vs Lajos Portisch**, Lucerne Olympiad 1982, Reti Opening / Tarrasch Defence (A04), 0–1. Miles wants to mix it up, but finds the veteran Portisch can answer blow for blow. Portisch had a massive career edge against Miles.
- **Nigel Short vs Lajos Portisch**, Linares 1990, Ruy Lopez, Modern Steinitz Variation (C75), 0-1. Crafty win over the rising star Short, who is 28 years younger.

➔ To replay: [The chess games of Lajos Portisch](#)

His positional style, characterized by quiet maneuvering – Lajos Portisch has been called the Hungarian Petrosian or Hungarian Botvinnik – is effective but at first glance unspectacular.





(Photo: Rob C. Croes, Anefo)

Portisch at OHRA, Invitation Open, in Amsterdam 1984

In 2004, Lajos Portisch was awarded the '**Nemzet Sportolója**', Hungary's highest national sports achievement award.

Interview:

English language interview by Albert Silver with Lajos Portisch on 1 Feb 2012,

Part 1: <http://www.chessbase.com/newsdetail...>, and Part 2: <http://www.chessbase.com/newsdetail...>

Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnAHQo-BS6Y> (from the IZT in Rio de Janeiro 1979), and  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_4aAJu24hE&ebc=ANyPxKoOESYwjjabIkA1W1R8XXf3zpjKfRsJHQbjMSmVhfKDKYfMqKUQ3zwLkMfEqoJBTnfRI1KGDgMXNwzldSTeAwPwvGWf5g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_4aAJu24hE&ebc=ANyPxKoOESYwjjabIkA1W1R8XXf3zpjKfRsJHQbjMSmVhfKDKYfMqKUQ3zwLkMfEqoJBTnfRI1KGDgMXNwzldSTeAwPwvGWf5g)

Sources:

[http://www.chessgames.com/player/lajos\\_portisch.html](http://www.chessgames.com/player/lajos_portisch.html) (Chessgames)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lajos\\_Portisch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lajos_Portisch) (Wikipedia)

<http://alchetron.com/Lajos-Portisch-337047-W> (Alchetron with many pictures)

<http://tartajubow.blogspot.ch/2012/02/lajos-portisch.html> (Portrait)

[Petrosian's Other Difficult Opponent - Chess.com](http://www.chess.com) (Portisch has a plus score against Petrosian)

[Portisch wins 'Portisch 75' rapid tournament | ChessBase](http://www.chessbase.com) (Birthday rapid tournament)

<https://de.chessbase.com/post/lajos-portisch-zum-80sten-geburtstag> (ChessBase in german)

[Lajos Portisch celebrates his 85th birthday \(fide.com\)](http://www.fide.com) (Laudatio by GM **Emil Sutovsky**, FIDE)



Korchnoi vs. Portisch, Brussels OHRA '86 (Photo: CHESSP.com)

### **Fifty Years of Shades in Chess Grey Lajos Portisch and Viktor Korchnoi:**

They first met otb in <1961> (Maroczy Memorial, ten years after Geza Maroczy had died), and last in <2011> (Botvinnik Memorial Veterans, Rapid, Hundred years Anniv of Mikhail Botvinnik). Vic won both tournaments outright and comfortably, but Portisch won their Mini-Match on board three during the famous USSR vs. Rest of the World battle in Belgrade in 1970. Later, Korchnoi won their Candidate's quarter-final played in Bad Kissingen in 1983.



Portisch vs. Kasparov, Dubai Chess Olympiad '86 (Photo: Gerhard F. Hund)





**Four times winner in Beverwijk / Wijk aan Zee (Hoogovens)** (Photo 1972: Bert Verhoeff, Anefo)





**Hungarian Olympic gold medal team with Janos Kadar in Budapest, 4 December 1978.** remonews.com



**Lajos Portisch at the Chess Olympiad in Malta in 1980**  
(Photo: Gerhard F. Hund)

### **Lajos Portisch, a chess legend**

Lajos Portisch, born on April 4th 1937 in Zalaegerszeg (Hungary), was one of the strongest non-Soviet chess players from the early 1960s into the early 1990s.

4 wins at Wijk aan Zee and former Beverwijk (Hoogovens), 3 wins at IBM Amsterdam, 3 wins at Bosna Sarajevo, 2 wins at Hastings, winning at Tilburg, Las Palmas, Skopje/Ohrid, San Antonio, Monte Carlo, Vidmar Memorial twice, Reggio Emilia twice, and several more.

Lajos Portisch participated in twelve consecutive Interzonals from 1962 through 1993, qualifying for the World Chess Championship Candidates' cycle a total of eight times. Won two IZT.

Portisch played twenty times at the Olympiad between 1956 and 2000, in total 260 olympic games, winning team Gold in 1978. In Hungarian National Chess Championships, he either shared the title or won it outright nine times.