

To the FIDE Presidential Board

Dear Sirs,

I felt that this is the right moment to propose a change in the Women's World Championship Cycle. I appreciate what FIDE has done for the development of women's chess for many years, which has benefited many female chess players greatly. But, as four times Women's World Champion, and the current winner of the Grand Prix cycle, I think it is necessary to seriously talk about the format of the title.

The current system is generating a new champion every year, one from a knock-out tournament and the other from a match. I think it is pointless to define the winner of the Grand Prix series as the "challenger" to the winner from the knock-out system, especially when someone who won the Grand Prix series has also won many times the World Championship Match. Objectively speaking, it is time to correct the format of Women's Chess, as it is important for its promotion. If the winner of the World Championship Match didn't receive any privilege from being the champion, it will be quite upsetting for young girls who are still dreaming of this title. We can also imagine that if these matches are very one-sided, the event will be boring and finding sponsors will be difficult. When there is one person winning all the matches with ease FIDE should think about arranging the format to be more reasonable.

Above all, I would like to propose a few alternatives to the current system:


First, the format could simply be the same as the Open cycle. The knock-out system of the current Championship will be the equivalent of the World Cup, and there will be a Candidate's tournament to determine the challenger to the reigning World Champion, to be determined in a match. This is quite simple and ideal, as in most popular sports the World Championship format for Men and Women are the same. Chess shouldn't be an exception in this aspect. I briefly discussed this idea with FIDE officials and the feedback that I got is that finding sponsors under this system is difficult, which is why I have a second proposal.

The alternative is to change the format back to the old system, with Zonals and a Candidate knock-out match system. Considering the financial crisis it will be a good alternative as the player who qualified from the Zonal will be entering the 1/8<sup>th</sup> Candidate Match bracket, playing a match and the winner moving on to the 1/4<sup>th</sup> bracket, etc. The disadvantage of this format is that only stronger players will have a chance to fight for the title, though perhaps that is also reasonable.

Finally, if the above two are not suitable for some reason, there is still another possibility which is to set a match between the winner of the World Cup (Knock-out tournament) and the winner of the Grand Prix series, and from the winner of that match we will have a challenger to the reigning World Champion.

In conclusion, it is really necessary to figure out the most fair system for Women's Chess and giving the reigning World Champion some kind of privilege for actually winning the title. Currently, the title is too easily stripped from a player in a simple World Championship knock-out event. This is important from both a professional and promotional view point.

Please, kindly consider these points

Sincerely,  
Hou Yifan   
Women's World Champion