

 **Byrne Robert Eugene** (20.04.1928 – 12.04.2013)



U.S. Grandmaster (1964). Byrne became an [International Master](#) based on his results at the Chess Olympiad at Helsinki in 1952 (bronze medal on third board, and a very fine win over Bronstein when the latter was at the height of his power). In that same year Byrne graduated from [Yale University](#). He went on to become a professor of [philosophy](#) at [Indiana University](#), and his academic career left him little time for chess until he turned chess professional in the late 1960s. Byrne had a fine sense of humour. (Photo: CNC)

He had already **won the 1960 U.S. Open** (co-winning it again in **1963 & 1966**), came already 2nd in the U.S. Championships of 1959/60 and 1961/2, but concentrated on his college teaching career. **Won the 1972 U.S. Championship** (and Zonal) after play-off above Reshevsky and Kavalek.

Byrne reached his peak when he finished third in the Leningrad Interzonal in 1973 behind Viktor Korchnoi and Anatoly Karpov, ahead of such luminaries as Mikhail Tal, Bent Larsen, Robert Hübner, Svetozar Gligoric, and Mark Taimanov. Byrne was aged then 45.

Qualified for the Candidate's as only the fourth American (after [Samuel Reshevsky](#), [Bobby Fischer](#), and [Pal Benko](#), not counting [Reuben Fine](#) who was seeded into the 1950 Candidates Tournament, but declined his invitation), Byrne lost his quarter-final match to Boris Spassky (+0=3-3) in 1974.

In the next Interzonal, Biel 1976, he again did well, finishing fifth (+6=11-2) equal with Vasily Smyslov and Robert Hübner, but half a point out of contention for a Candidate place play-off.

Best results: *Mar-del Plata 1961, joint 2nd, **Santa-Fe 1961, 1st** (he dominated this small but strong event with 6½/7, two full points ahead of [Miroslav Filip](#), [Hector Rossetto](#), [Aleksandar Matanović](#)), **Buenos-Aires 1964, clear 3rd** (earning the GM title, behind winner Keres and runner up Petrosian), **Hastings 1971/72, 3rd-4th** (together with Mecking; Korchnoi won on tie-break alongside Karpov), **Torremolinos (Costa del Sol series) 1976, 1st**, **Las-Palmas 1976, 3rd-4rd**, **Baden bei Wien 1980, 3rd-4rd**, Harare 1983, =1st, *New York Kavkasian GM Invitation 1983, 3rd-5th*, Lagos 1993, 1st.*

He has played on nine US Olympiad teams between 1952 and 1978, and **at Leipzig in 1960, Robert Byrne was awarded an individual gold medal for the best third-board score** (+9=6). **He won team gold (board one) in 1976 at Haifa, Israel**, boycotted by communist countries.

Best FIDE ELO: 2605 in 1973 as no. 12= together with Geller and Stein.
Peak rating SONAS: 2720. Peak ranking SONAS: no. 11 in 1973 and 1974.

From 1973 until 2006, Robert Byrne edited the *New York Times* chess column with distinction.

He has also been a frequent contributor to *Chess Life* magazine, the publication of the [United States Chess Federation](#).

Byrne's younger brother, [Donald Byrne](#), was also a leading player of that time.

Famous games:

Bronstein vs. R. Byrne, Chess Olympiad in Helsinki 1952, **0-1**

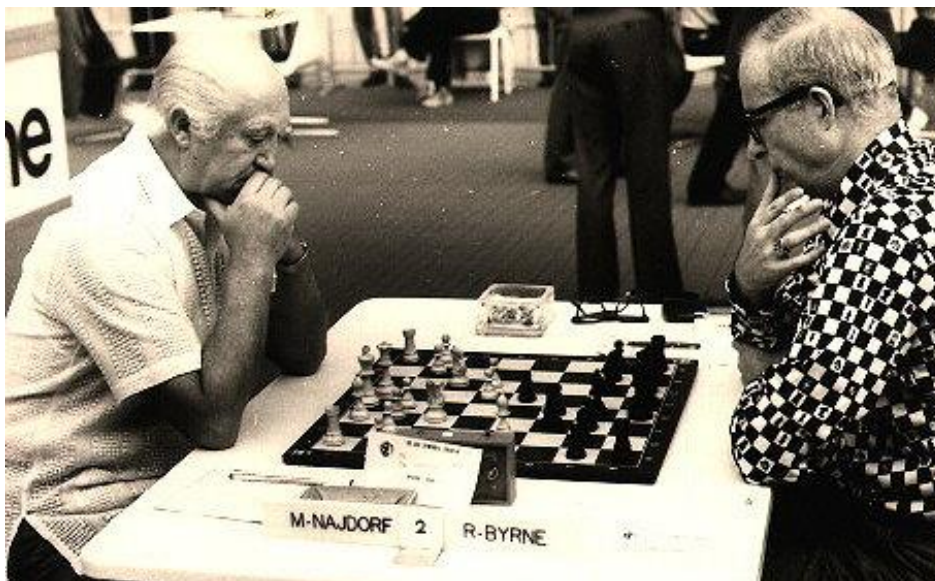
→ Replay: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1438193>

Fischer, Robert – Byrne, Robert, New York, US-Championship 1965, **0-1**

→ Replay: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1044225>

Byrne, R. - Balashov, Y., Moscow, Alekhine Memorial 1971, **1-0**

→ Replay: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1024164>



Miguel Najdorf - Robert Byrne in 1974 (Photo: CNC)



An image from “Chess Life” in June 1967, it features Robert Byrne, Vladimir Savon and Leonid Stein

Source and further readings on Bosna Tournament in Sarajevo 1967:

<https://www.chess.com/forum/view/general/sarajevo-1967> (by Batgirl)



Source: Soloscacchi

R. Byrne vs, V. Korchnoi 0-1, BBC Television, London 1979, Video upload:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xIIftOIMCg>: Two Chess Grandmasters play each other on your TV, and they're trying their best with their own commentaries. From the golden years of modern chess: Korchnoi and R. Byrne giving move-by-move analysis: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1082535>. (note: the picture above – with Botvinnik watching – is taken from the Chess Olympiad in Leipzig 1960)

Sources:

<http://www.thechesspedia.com/byrne-robert-eugene/> (Chesspedia)

<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessplayer?pid=15496> (Chessgames Portrait)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Byrne_%28chess_player%29 (Wikipedia)

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/12/crosswords/chess/12chess.html?_r=0 (New York Times)

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/crosswords/chess/robert-byrne-chess-grandmaster-dies-at-84.html?_r=0 (New York Times)

<https://www.zeit.de/2018/09/spiele-schach-09#!top-of-overscroll> (Grandmaster Helmut Pfleger on the Byrne brothers, in german language)

<https://de.chessbase.com/post/zum-90sten-geburtstag-von-robert-byrne> (André Schulz, ChessBase, in german language)