

 Portisch Lajos (04.04.1937)



Hungarian Grandmaster (1961), one of the world's 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.

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

### **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 where he won all in all **eleven Olympiad medals** (team and individual points or performance).

**Lajos Portisch also played on board one** for his team to win the **Gold medal for Hungary at the Chess Olympiad in Buenos Aires 1978**, surpassing the USSR.

Portisch has also represented Hungary at eight European Team Championships, winning a total of nine medals (individual and team all together). Portisch played again board one for Hungary at the inaugural World Team Championship, 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 for himself in 1958 when he won the Hungarian championship and an international tournament at Balatonfüred (Asztalos Memorial).

*Apart from national championships and (inter)zonals*, he played in about 75 strong events from 1956 to the 1990s, **winning or sharing about 25 first prizes in elite tournaments**: **Budapest (Alekhine Memorial) 1956**, equal with Pál Benkő (all player from Hungary; Benkő emigrated soon afterwards to the United States), **Balatonfüred (Asztalos Memorial) 1958**, ahead of Alexander Tolush; **San Benedetto del Tronto 1960**, **Sarajevo Bosna 1962**, equal with Svetozar Gligoric; **Sarajevo Bosna 1963**, **Amsterdam-IBM 1963**, **Hoogovens Beverwijk 1965**, equal with Efim Geller; **Amsterdam-IBM 1967**; **Skopje-Ohrid 1968**, ahead of Efim Geller and Lev Polugaevsky; **Monte Carlo 1969**, equal with Vasily Smyslov; **Amsterdam-IBM 1969**; **Hastings 1969-1970** and **Hastings 1970-1971** (both outright), **Adelaide 1971**, **Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee 1972**, **Las Palmas 1972** (inaugural edition of the series), ahead of joint runners-up Bent Larsen and Vasily Smyslov; **San Antonio, USA 1972**, Portisch on tie-break, equal with Anatoly Karpov and Tigran Petrosian, **Ljubljana / Portoroz (Vidmar Memorial) 1973**; **Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee 1975**; **Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee 1978**, ahead of Viktor Korchnoi; **Tilburg 1978**, ahead of Robert Hübner; **Reggio Emilia 1984-85**; **Portoroz / Ljubljana (Vidmar Memorial) 1985**, equal with Tony Miles and Zoltan Ribli; **Sarajevo Bosna 1986**, equal with Kiril Georgiev and Lev Psakhis (5. Boris Spassky), **Reggio Emilia B-group 1991-92**, **Cannes (Open) 1992**, shared first, **Reggio Emilia 1993-94**, **Jakarta (Gunadarma GM) 1996** (clear first ahead of Adianto, Torre, Krasenkow, Ftacnik, M. Gurevich, I. Sokolov, seven Elo 2600+: <http://indonesiabase.com/gunadarma-gms-jakarta-1996/>).

Note: In Milano 1975, Portisch won the round robin – then 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 the final match against Anatoli Karpov. Nevertheless, Portisch is sometimes credited as tournament winner – but this seems not appropriate, Karpov won the event.

**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 participated in twelve consecutive (!!) Interzonals from 1962 through 1993**, qualifying for the World Chess Championship Candidates' cycle eight times (1965, 1968, 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1985, and 1988), missing the qualification for the Candidate's only in the Interzonals 1962, 1970, 1990, and 1993.

Winner of the **Interzonal Rio de Janeiro 1979** (joint with Petrosian and Hübner). Winner of the **Interzonal Toluca in 1982** (joint with Torre).

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 Lajos Portisch: =2<sup>nd</sup> of the world, together with Korchnoi, behind Karpov in **1981 (Jan.-June) at ELO 2650**.

Best rating of Portisch: **ELO 2655** in 1980 (January-December), then ranked as 4<sup>th</sup> of the world.

Unfortunately his games have sometimes not become widely appreciated; his positional style, characterized by quiet maneuvering – Lajos Portisch has been called the Hungarian Petrosian or Hungarian Botvinnik – is effective but unspectacular.

Lajos Portisch lives in Hungary, and is still active in local tournaments. His younger brother is [Ferenc Portisch](#).

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 Interzonal at Rio de Janeiro 1979)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_4aAJu24hE&ebc=ANyPxKoOESYwjjabIkA1W1R8XXf3zpjKfRsJHQbjMSmVhfKDKYfMqKUQ3zwLkMfEqoJBTnfRI1KGDgMXNwzldSTeAwPvwGWf5g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_4aAJu24hE&ebc=ANyPxKoOESYwjjabIkA1W1R8XXf3zpjKfRsJHQbjMSmVhfKDKYfMqKUQ3zwLkMfEqoJBTnfRI1KGDgMXNwzldSTeAwPvwGWf5g)

Sources:

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

<http://www.chessnc.com/biography/person-1049.html> (CNC - Chess Network Company)

[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)

<https://hunonchess.com/chess-legends-happy-80th-birthday-mr-lajos-portisch/> (HunOnChess)

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



Korchnoi vs. Portisch, Brussels OHRA 1986

## 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 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.



### Lajos Portisch, a chess legend

Lajos Portisch, born on April 4th 1937 in Zalaegerszeg (Hungary), was one of the strongest non-Soviet players from the early 1960s into the late 1980s – in fact at the time he was nicknamed the "Hungarian Botvinnik".

*Lajos Portisch participated in twelve consecutive Interzonals from 1962 through 1993, qualifying for the World Chess Championship Candidates' cycle a total of eight times (1965, 1968, 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1985, and 1988), missing the qualification step for the Candidate's only in the Interzonals of 1962, 1970, 1990, and 1993.*

Portisch set several all-time records in Chess Olympiads. In Hungarian Chess Championships, he either shared the title or won it outright a total of nine times, and was awarded the "Nemzet Sportoloja", Hungary's highest national sports achievement award. His main hobby is singing operatic arias, having a fine baritone voice, a quality shared by Vasily Smyslov.