



## Players

### Teimour Radjabov



**Azerbaijan, 20 yo**

**Elo: 2746**

**Date and place of birth: 12.3.1987 in Baku**

**Lives in: Baku**

**National ranking: 2**

**World ranking: 9**

**World junior ranking: 1**

**Best world ranking: 7 (2747 Elo, April 2007)**

**In Biel GMT: 2006 (3rd)**

### The Fighter: Teimour Radjabov

He just celebrated his 20th birthday last spring and is the second youngest participant of the top Grandmaster Tournament in Biel -- and he already is one of the big favorites.

Radjabov drew attention early in Biel: in 1999, he first played in the Master Tournament, two years before he became the youngest Grandmaster in the world.

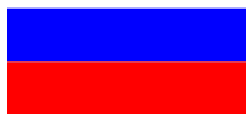
He is not only the world's strongest U20 player but has also made it to the top ten. Among his successes, one can mention his 2nd place at the European Championships, a bronze medal at the World Championships, two victories in the European Team Championships, and various good results at top-level tournaments. His declared goal is to become World Champion.

It has been a good year for Radjabov. Together with Topalov and Aronian, he won the high-level tournament in Wijk an Zee (Netherlands). His style is very active and opposed to many other top players. We will certainly see some interesting fights of his in Biel.

Radjabov is not only a very good chess player. He has a bachelor degree in law and intends to continue studying. Last year, he was named goodwill ambassador for UNICEF (United Nations International Children and Education Fund) in Azerbaijan. The grandmaster will use his charisma to bring media attention to various health problems affecting children. (sk)



## Alexander Grischuk



**Russia, 23 yo**

**Elo: 2726**

**Date and place of birth:** 31.10.1983 in Moscow

**Lives in:** Moscow

**National ranking:** 6

**World ranking:** 14

**Best world ranking:** 6 (2732 Elo, July 2003)

**In Biel GMT:** 2001 (6th)

### The Super Rapid: Alexander Grischuk

Alexander Grischuk is one of those players who too rarely got invited to world-class (closed) tournaments although he is a top-player. He was very successful early on, but often in the shadow of other young players. His style is universal; he feels at home in very complex positions and has an excellent endgame technique.

He won several Youth Championships in Russia, became a Grandmaster at 16, and won gold medals in different team competitions with Russia. He is extremely successful at faster time limits. He won twice the Ordix Open in Frankfurt, the worlds' top rapid chess event. Last year he became a Blitz World Champion in Rishon-Le-Zion (Israel).

In 1999, Grischuk played successfully a difficult challenge in Biel when he finished 11th in the strong Master Tournament. Two years later, however, he finished last at the closed Grandmaster Tournament.

Grischuk is one of many chess Grandmasters that (successfully) started playing poker. His ambitions at chess are still high, as he has shown in Elista (Russia), where he qualified with an impressive result for the next World Championships (Mexico, September 2007). He defeated his compatriots Malakhov and Rublevsky with surprising ease. We hope that in Biel he will also show more than bluffs! (sk)



## Magnus Carlsen



**Norway, 16 yo**

**Elo: 2710**

**Date and place of birth:** 30.11. 1990 in Lommedalen

**Lives in:** Lommedalen

**National ranking:** 1

**World ranking:** 17

**World junior ranking:** 2

**Best world ranking:** 17 (2710 Elo, July 2007)

**In Biel GMT:** 2005 (6th), 2006 (2nd)

### The «normal Wonderboy»: Magnus Carlsen

At the age of 8, he barely knew the rules of chess; five years later he was a Grandmaster. The Washington Post called him the «Mozart of chess». Magnus Carlsen, however, seems like a normal teenager who likes to give self-critical remarks in interviews. His former secondant, Norwegian GM Simen Agdestein, had been chosen for two reasons. First of all because he was the strongest player in the country when Magnus' surprising career started but also because he used to play for Norwegian national soccer team and Magnus himself is a devoted fan of soccer.

As opposed to most prodigies from former Soviet republics who benefit from public support, chess is not popular in Norway. Therefore, Carlsen's achievement to reach 2700 at the age of 16 - something unique in the chess world - speaks for itself. He was already a Grandmaster at 13, a record only beaten by the Ukrainian Karjakin who was six months younger.

Meanwhile, Carlsen is 16 and has slowly gotten rid of the nickname "Wonderboy." After his second place in Biel in 2006, he belongs to the favorites this year. He is expected to be very greedy after his unlucky defeat in the candidates' matches for the world championships. His determination to fight his games makes Carlsen a popular player around the world.

His father, who accompanies him around the world, has an interesting blog (<http://blog.magnuschess.com>). (sk)



## Judit Polgar



**Hungary, 30 yo**

**Elo: 2707**

**Date and place of birth:** 23.7. 1976 in Budapest

**Lives in:** Budapest

**National ranking:** 2

**World ranking:** 19

**World women ranking:** 1

**Best world ranking:** 8 (2735 Elo, October 2005)

**In Biel:** 1993: 20th (out of 73) of the interzonal tournament

### The Attacker: Judit Polgar

"There isn't a woman player in the world that I can't give knight odds to and still beat." When Bobby Fischer said this, Judit Polgar was not even born. Ironically, when she was 15, she broke his record of being the world's youngest Grandmaster.

Her story is unheard of: the father, Laszlo Polgar, decided to turn his three daughters Zsuzsa, Sofia, and Judit into strong chess players. Zsuzsa, became World Women's Champion, but the big star of the family is the youngest daughter, Judit (born in 1976). In the chess world, where women are scarce, the female prodigy drew a lot of attention in the late 1980s. In Biel, in 1989, Judit scared many established Swiss masters with her aggressive play.

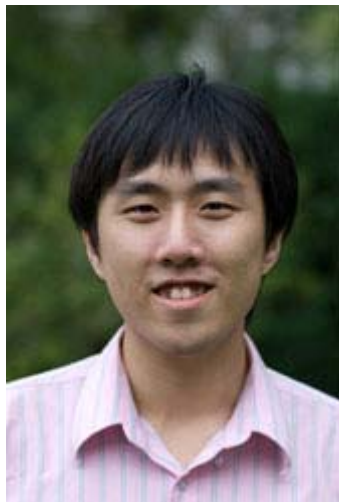
In 1993, Judit Polgar played the Interzonal Tournament in Biel and finished 20th out of 73 participants. This year will be her first Grandmaster Tournament in Biel.

She has played chess at the world's highest levels for over ten years now. In spite of the birth of her two children in 2004 and 2006, she has not lost any strength. At the end of 2006, she even won the tournament of Hoogeveen (Holland) where she beat twice the world's number one, Veselin Topalov.

Judit Polgar is an extremely dangerous player at attacking, which she proved in numerous games. We expect to see some brilliant games of her this year in Biel! (sk)



## Bu Xiangzhi



**China, 21 yo**

**Elo: 2685**

**Date and place of birth:** 10.12.1985 in Qingdao

**Lives in:** Beijing

**National ranking:** 2

**World ranking:** 25

**Best world ranking:** 25 (2685 Elo, July 2007)

**In Biel GMT:** -

### The Pragmatic: Bu Xiangzhi

There is no evidence where chess originates from, but presumably from India or China. Through the Islamic expansion, the game arrived in Europe via Spain. Strangely enough, the "Western" game of chess was less popular in China than its Chinese relative called Xiangqi, or "Chinese Chess".

Only in 1991, when Xie Jun became Women World Champion, did chess grow in popularity. Although the country has not had a top ten player yet, China is regularly well ranked in team competitions. Last year, the team won a silver medal at the Olympiads in Turin. This fantastic result would not have been possible without the impressive score of Bu Xiangzhi at the first board. Against some of world's strongest players, he achieved an outstanding performance of 8 out of 12 without any defeat. In 1999, he had already caught the world's attention when he became the youngest Grandmaster of all times, shortly before his 14th birthday.

Bu Xiangzhi became fascinated by chess after reading a translation of Bobby Fischer's famous book "My 60 Memorable Games." Perhaps this is the reason for Bu's pragmatic style. He rarely loses a game and although he is not playing for the audience, his active positional chess is quite attractive. He is in good shape right now and at the peak of his young career, number 25 in the world ranking. This must be a good omen for his first tournament in Biel! (sk)



## Loek van Wely



**Netherlands, 34 yo**

**Elo:** 2679

**Date and place of birth:** 7.10.1972 in Heesch

**Lives in:** Tilburg

**National ranking:** 1

**World ranking:** 34

**Best world ranking:** 10 (2714 Elo, October 2001)

**In Biel GMT:** 2000 (2nd)

### The Senior: Loek van Wely

Chess is very popular in the Netherlands. Each year several top-level tournaments with world-class players are held in this small country. The career of several Grandmasters started in non-credit school courses.

Loek van Wely is one of the first players to come out of this fertile soil. He is often invited at the tournaments in Wijk an Zee, Tilburg and Hoegeveen; he improved his game and managed to become a world-class Grandmaster. His dynamic and aggressive approach combined with a deep knowledge for openings make him a very dangerous opponent.

Van Wely has played twice in Biel: In 1993 he took part in the Interzonal Tournament and in 2000 he finished second in the closed GM Tournament, behind Peter Svidler. It is a little strange to say that van Wely is the oldest player this year, although he is only 34 years old. For sure, the old man will not be beaten easily!

Van Wely has been very successful. He won six consecutive Netherlands Championships between 2000 and 2005, finished first at various open and closed tournaments, and won a gold medal twice with the Netherlands at the European Team Championships (2001 and 2005). *(sk)*



## Alexander Onischuk



**United States, 31 yo**

**Elo: 2650**

**Date and place of birth:** 3.9.1975 in Sevastopol (Ukraine)

**Lives in:** Baltimore

**National ranking:** 2

**World ranking:** 61

**Best world ranking:** 28 (2667 Elo, July 2001)

**In Biel GMT:** 1999 (3rd); won the GMT B in 1997

### The Joker: Alexander Onischuk

Some people win the lottery. Alexander Onischuk won the Green Card Lottery and went to the USA. The Ukrainian Grandmaster was unhappy about the situation in his country and wanted to go "to a country where hard work is valued and paid." He made it to Baltimore, where he now lives.

The 31-year-old discovered chess very early. He benefited from public support for chess in the Soviet Union, and the tough competition there forced him to be ambitious at a young age. In 1995, he played at the World Championships U20 for his country and finished second. After the collapse of the USSR, Onischuk was allowed to travel freely around the world and he played for Ukraine's National Team several times. He was especially successful at the Chess Olympiads in 1996 and 1998 when his country finished second twice.

This year will be Onischuk's 4th appearance in Biel. In the late 1990s, he already had two convincing results. After the 11th place in the Grandmaster Tournament in 1996, which hardly made him happy, he finished 1st a year later in the Grandmaster Tournament B. In 1999, he came in 3rd in the Grandmaster Tournament A. Although he is not one among the top favorites for this year's anniversary tournament, the tough, hard-to-beat Onischuk should certainly not be underestimated.  
(sk)

His official website: [www.alexonischuk.com](http://www.alexonischuk.com)





## Alexander Motylev



**Russia, 28 yo**

**Elo: 2648**

**Date and place of birth:** 17.6.1979 in Yekaterinburg

**Lives in:** Yekaterinburg

**National ranking:** 18

**World ranking:** 68

**Best world ranking:** 23 (2680 Elo, April 2005)

**In Biel GMT:** -

### The Quiet: Alexander Motylev

If he came from another country, he would have become famous quite early. But as a Russian, Alexander Motylev was just one of many very talented players. He does not have to hide from anybody. Motylev became Champion of Russia in 2001 and won the Corus B Tournament in Wijk an Zee (Holland), which allowed him to participate in the A Tournament the following year. There he scored reasonably well against world-class players. Another great success of Motylev's was the 1st place at Aeroflot Open in Moscow 2005, one of the world's top open tournaments.

In spite of his young age, Motylev has assisted other Grandmasters several times at matches, for example his compatriot Vladimir Kramnik when he successfully defended his World Champion Title against Veselin Topalov in 2006.

Motylev, who was born in 1979, comes from a family with a passion for chess. Both his grandfather and his father were good players. In his youth, he was an ambitious soccer player as well. This game is «only» a hobby for him nowadays.

Alexander Motylev's chess is very aggressive; he loves to attack directly the opponent's king. On a good day, he is able to put the whole board on fire - therefore his first appearance in Biel will certainly be an entertaining one. *(sk)*





## Boris Avrukh



**Israel, 29 yo**

**Elo: 2645**

**Date and place of birth:** 10.2.1978 in Karaganda (Kazakhstan)

**Lives in:** Beer-Sheva

**National ranking:** 4

**World ranking:** 74

**Best world ranking:** 50 (2680 Elo, July 2005)

**In Biel GMT:** 1999 (2nd)

### The Faithful: Boris Avrukh

Everybody in Biel would be very happy with an achievement by Boris Avrukh. Since 1995, he has been playing here every year except for one. At a time where players can choose between several open tournaments per week, this is something very rare.

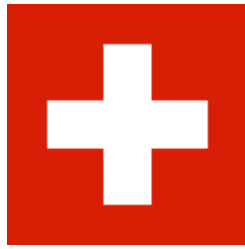
It was a pleasure to invite Avrukh to the anniversary tournament. He will have to fight a much harder competition than in the Master Tournament, which he won twice (in 2000 and 2001) and finished second twice (1995 and 2003). In 1999, he played the closed Grandmaster Tournament and was second as well. No other player in the history of the Biel Chess Festival has been as successful as the Israeli.

In the rest of the world, Avrukh's aggressive chess pays off as well. He received a bronze medal for his performance at the Chess Olympiad in Turin in 2006 and became a World Champion Under 12 in 1990.

Avrukh is a fighter who is hard to beat when he has the white pieces, and he has a good sense of initiative. He seems to play very well in Biel. Perhaps he will be even more successful this year than before. *(sk)*



## Yannick Pelletier



**Switzerland, 30 yo**

**Elo: 2583**

**Date and place of birth:** 22.9.1976 in Biel

**Lives in:** Biel

**National ranking:** 3

**Best world ranking:** 69th (2624 Elo, January 2003)

**In Biel GMT:** 1997 (6th), 1998 (5th), 1999 (5th), 2001 (4th), 2002 (5th), 2003 (4th), 2004 (4th), 2005 (3rd), 2006 (5th)

### The Local: Yannick Pelletier

Until recently, Switzerland was not strong at chess. Although 1976 vice-world-champion Viktor Korchnoi settled down in the country, the game has not become popular. Many talents did not break through or chose a mainstream life.

Yannick Pelletier, born in Biel in 1976, was the first one to challenge the pattern. After high school, he decided to become a professional chess player. Pelletier's character is a perfect fit: he is not only talented but also hard working and self-critical. He both calculates precisely and has a good feeling for more quiet phases of the game. His technique is very clean.

The likeable Pelletier speaks several languages fluently, amongst them Russian. He was three-time Swiss individual champion, won four times the Swiss team championship with his team SG Biel, and has played regularly with the Swiss national team in many international events.

His home games will not be easy as his rating is the lowest at this level. However, the fighter Pelletier will not be beaten easily. A good performance would bring tremendous pride to his hometown Biel!  
(sk)