

Vera Menchik



(1906-1944)

World Chess

Hall of Fame

Inducted 2011

The world's first women's chess champion, Vera Menchik was born in Russia in 1906, learned chess at age nine, and moved to England as a teenager in 1921. Over the course of her career, she competed for Russia, Czechoslovakia, and England. She became the first Women's World Champion in 1927, and successfully defended her title six times over the next 17 years. She would lose only one game over the course of these seven championship tournaments.

Menchik defeated many men in tournament play, including Max Euwe and Samuel Reshevsky. They and other notable players she beat became members of what was known as the "Vera Menchik Club." From 1929 onward, she was a fixture at Hastings Congress tournaments, as well as at other international competitions. One of her greatest successes was at Ramsgate 1929, when she tied for second with Akiba Rubinstein just a half-point behind Jose Raul Capablanca and ahead of her teacher Géza Maróczy. She won matches against Jacques Mieses in 1942 and Sonja Graf in 1934 and 1937. Menchik's career was cut tragically short when she, her two sisters, and their mother were killed in a V-1 rocket bombing raid at their South London home in June 1944. The Women's Olympiad trophy is known as the Vera Menchik Cup in her honor.



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