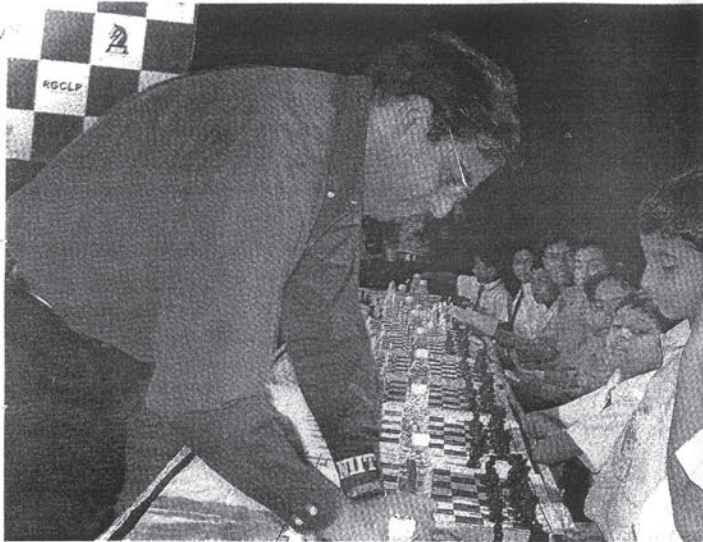


## VISWANATHAN ANAND WORKS THE KEYBOARD TO TELL WHAT MAKES HIM THE CHAMPION OF THE CHESS BOARD



Anand teaching school children a move or two

### Why did you decide to take up chess?

When I was about six, I saw my elder siblings play chess and pestered my mother into teaching me. Very soon, I was beating everyone at home and they thought it would be good to join a club. So my sister would take me to the Tal chess club on Thursdays and weekends. At the club we had a Sunday blitz where you stayed on if you won or joined a group and waited your turn. I got quite good in playing blitz and would end up playing for hours. Somewhere there people saw that I had talent. When I became nation-

ally, I was able to feel special, travel the world and do what I truly enjoy. Moreover, chess players love being their own boss and hate having to wake up early!

I guess you travel for so many events that your life is dictated by your performance and events and maybe you can't be home for a festival or birthday of a relative.

**Who have your chess idols been?**  
Fischer and Tal.  
[For those readers who don't know their bishop from their knight, American Bobby Fischer was a world chess

champion after an unbelievable performance. I became recognised as a chess talent. I would say it was only after I finished university that I more or less became professional. By then I was playing all the top events and had entered the World Championship cycle.

**I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FEEL SPECIAL, TRAVEL THE WORLD AND DO WHAT I TRULY ENJOY. MOREOVER, CHESS PLAYERS LOVE BEING THEIR OWN BOSS AND HATE HAVING TO WAKE UP EARLY! — ON WHAT CHESS HAS GIVEN HIM**

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I guess you travel for so many events that your life is dictated by your performance and events and maybe you can't be home for a festival or birthday of a relative.

**Who or what would you attribute your success in the game to?**  
Hard work and staying clear of chess politics.

**What are the key mental attributes needed to take up chess as a sport?**

ally, I was able to feel special, travel the world and do what I truly enjoy. Moreover, chess players love being their own boss and hate having to wake up early!

**Any concentration tips that you can share with us?**  
I find it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time. So what I do is concentrate in short bursts but with great intensity. Many times when you are trying to solve a problem, it is helpful to maybe leave the problem aside. It keeps germinating in your head and all of a sudden, you find the right answer.

### What role do you see yourself playing in popularising chess in India?

We have an initiative called the NIIT Mind Champions Academy. The aim is to introduce chess to children at a young age. We have been seeing the numbers swell and we are already in many states in India and hope to be able to take it to every state. We have seen a huge participation from the east. In fact, Assam has been one of our top performers. West Bengal has always been a stronghold of chess and we hope to maximise our presence there.

At present, we reach out to 7,000 chess clubs in schools and have 850,000 members. We hope to cross the million mark soon. What we have seen through our Impact study is that children belonging to the initiative have also shown a marked improvement in academics. They seem to have developed skills like being competitive and

completely on it. Like in the last matches, I will work both on the chess as well as on the stamina, that is equally important.

### Who have you enjoyed playing against the most and why?

The only person you enjoy playing is the one who loses to you. He or she is a treasured person and you try hard to keep it that way forever!

### What has been the contribution of your family to your success?

My parents never forced me to play chess or compelled me to work on chess or win tournaments. I was just allowed to enjoy school, play many games and generally have a normal childhood. This was very important, in my opinion, not to feel any pressure as a child. When I started winning events, my mother travelled with me till I was old enough to travel by myself.

## HARD WORK AND STAYING CLEAR OF CHESS POLITICS — ON THE KEY TO HIS SUCCESS



With wife Aruna

Even today, my parents follow every game of mine. They have shown me how to be a normal person first and a chess champion later. My wife Aruna travels with me. She takes care of all the details and needs, so that I need to only concentrate on the game. She is my punching bag and is someone I can trust completely.

**What other sport do you follow?**  
Football and tennis.

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**  
I love travelling and going on wildlife safaris. I have an interest in astronomy. I like reading on current affairs, business and science. I love doing nothing if I can help it.

more patient. Additionally, their science and mathematics have improved.

We have to get more children acquainted with the game. Through the NIIT Mind Champions Academy initiative we hope to reach as many children as possible.

**You are all set to defend your World Championship title in April. How are you preparing for it?**  
It will be an intense match and right now my focus is

**Priyanka Roy**  
(What is your message for Viswanathan Anand?)  
Tell t2@abpmail.com)

## RAPID FIRE

**Most memorable game**  
Anand-Lautier, Biel 1997

**Favourite city**  
Chennai But Calcutta is where I had my first brush with stardom...

**Sportspersons I follow**



Roger Federer & Lionel Messi

**Favourite film**



Terminator. It's my lucky charm

**Favourite actor**



Rajanikanth

**Favourite actress**



Madhuri Dixit

**Favourite book**

One to Nine: The Inner Life of Numbers by Andrew Hodges

**Favourite chess term**  
Checkmate