

## Vaganian Rafael Artemovich (15.10.1951)



USSR / Armenian Grandmaster (1971) living later in Germany.

1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> for the Niemeyer tournament in the European Junior Championship in 1968-69 at Groningen (but second on tie-break). He became a four times winning member with the Soviet Union at the World Youth Team Championships in the period 1972-77.

He played 10 times in the USSR Championships, and his best results were **in 1989 at Odessa when he was crowned sole National Champion** and in 1975 when he was equal second after Petrosian.

His maybe most prominent wins dates from official tournaments: **Winner Interzonal in Biel 1985**. Vaganian arrived clear first, in a field including Polugaevsky, Seirawan, Ljubojevic, Andersson, Sax, Torre, or young Short (in total 18 players). In the following **Candidates' Tournament in Montpellier 1985, Raf Vaganian took joint first place**, with Arthur Yusupov and Andrei Sokolov, *but lost the semifinals match to A. Sokolov by 2-6 in Minsk in 1986. In 1988, he qualified again for the Candidates', but in the 1/8 final, he lost to Portisch narrowly by 2½-3½ in St. John (Canada).*

**Won or shared the victory** in **Vrnjacka Banja 1971** (as IM ahead of Stein in a pretty strong field including also Ivkov, Ljubojevic, Matulovic, Janosevic, Damjanovic, and Benko; Rafael Vaganian thus was awarded the GM title for this victory), Valencia 1974, Kragujevac 1974, San Feliu 1975, **Rome (Banco di Roma) 1977** (joint), **Sao Paolo 1977**, Kirovakan 1978, **Las Palmas (8<sup>th</sup>) 1979**, **Manila (Marlboro) 1981**, **Hastings 1982-83** (14 players, Vaganian 2.5 points ahead of the rest), **Moscow International 1982** (joint with Tal), **Tallinn (Keres Memorial) 1983** (joint with Tal, 16 players incl. Petrosian), **Lvov 1984**, (joint with Dorfman), **Nimzowitsch Memorial (50<sup>th</sup> Anniv of his death), Naestved 1985** (joint with Browne and Larsen), **Sochi (Chigorin Memorial) 1986** (equal with Alexander Beliavsky and Svetozar Gligorić, edging out Tal, Smyslov, Geller, among others), **Leningrad International (70<sup>th</sup> Anniv of October Revolution) 1987**, Marseille (closed) 1987, Copenhagen Open 1987, Esbjerg, North Sea Cup 1988 (joint with Kupreichik, ahead of Larsen), **Reykjavik Open 1990** (joint with a bunch of players), Toronto (closed) 1990, **Moscow International 1991**, Porz Open 1991 (joint), **Ter Appel (Cloister) 1992**, **Reggio Emilia 1992/93**, **Ter Appel (Cloister) 1993**, World Open, Philadelphia 1994 (joint, Serper won on tie-break score), **Reggio Emilia 1994/95**, Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2004 (joint, Rublevsky won in a three-way-tie).

With the **Soviet Union in the Olympiads of 1984 and 1986 two team gold medals plus an individual gold medal in 1986** as well as a team silver medal in 1978. *He played at board 5 in the match USSR vs the Rest of the World in 1984 (Vaganian lost to Ribli 1.5-2.5).* A member of the winning USSR team at the European Team Chess Championships in 1980 and 1983. Six times, a member of the **Armenian Team in the Olympiads with a bronze medal for the team ranking in 1992 and in 2004, plus a gold medal for the best individual performance at board 3 in 2004.**

Highest Elo rating: 2670 in 2005. **Highest ranking no. 3= of the world in (January-June) 1986** (after wining the Biel Interzonal in 1985, and co-winning the Candidate's the same year in 1985).

Famous games:

**Vaganian, Rafael- Forintos, Gyozo 1-0**, Moscow Moscow, 1975

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bf4 O-O 6.e3 Nbd7 7.Qc2 c6 8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Nxd5 exd5 10.Bd3 Bb4+ 11.Ke2 Nf6 12.Ne5 Re8 13.g4 g6 14.Rag1 Bd6 15.h4 c5 16.h5 cxd4 17.hxg6 Bxe5 18.g5 Bg4+ 19.Rxg4 Rc8 20.gxh7+ Kh8 21.Bxe5 Rxe5 22.gxf6 Rxc2+ 23.Bxc2 d3+ 24.Bxd3 Re8 25.Rhg1 **1-0**. → Replay: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1279083>

## Reshevsky vs. Vaganian 0-1, Skopje 1976

→ Replay: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1145474>

Sources: <http://www.chessnc.com/biography/person-1914.html> (CNC)

<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessplayer?pid=13989> Chessgames)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafael\\_Vaganian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafael_Vaganian) (Wikipedia)

<https://chess24.com/en/read/news/rafael-vaganian-anand-won-t-lose> (Interview in 2014)

[http://al20102007.narod.ru/ch\\_urs/1989/ch\\_urs89.html](http://al20102007.narod.ru/ch_urs/1989/ch_urs89.html) (USSR-ch in Odesa 1989)

<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chess.pl?tid=85469> (Biel Interzonal in 1985)

<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chess.pl?tid=83304> (Montpellier Candidate's in 1985)

[henry55](#) (Henryk Konaszczuk), chess.com member from Zabrze, Poland comments:

**Rafael Artemovich Vaganian**, also transliterated *Vahanyan* (Armenian: Ռաֆայել Վահանյան, Russian: Рафаэль Артёмович Ваганян) is an Armenian chess grandmaster known for his sharp tactical style of play. Vaganian was born October 15, 1951 in Yerevan.

He achieved International Grandmaster status in 1971, at the unusually young age of 19, following an excellent result at the Vrnjacka Banja tournament the same year, where he took first place ahead of Leonid Stein and Ljubomir Ljubojevic.

1971 was also the year that he finished fourth at the World Junior Chess Championship, the winner being the surprising Swiss player, Werner Hug. In the wake of this disappointing outcome, Vaganian was so upset with himself that he challenged Hug to a blitz match in an attempt to salvage some pride. The players blitzed for only a few minutes and Vaganian emerged as the winner by an incredible 10-0 scoreline! Hug never made a single GM norm.

In 1974, Vaganian was board one for the USSR team at the World Student Team Championship at Teesside (England), scoring 10/11 and taking the board one prize.

A cheerful and popular character on the grandmaster circuit, his tournament record is outstanding and includes further victories at Kragujevac 1974, São Paulo 1977, Kirovakan 1978, Las Palmas 1979, Manila 1981, Hastings 1982/83, Biel 1985 (Interzonal), Leningrad 1987, Toronto 1990 and Ter Apel 1992. At Moscow 1982 and Tallinn 1983, he shared first place with Mikhail Tal and at Naestved 1985 with Walter Browne and Bent Larsen, and was co-winner at Montpellier (Candidate's tournament) 1985. He won twice the Reggio Emilia chess tournament, the 35<sup>th</sup> edition 1992/93 and the 37<sup>th</sup> edition 1994/95.

**At Odessa in 1989, he won the 56th Soviet Championship on his 38th birthday.** In previous attempts, Vaganian had shared third place in Leningrad 1974 and Moscow 1983, whilst finishing shared second to fifth at his hometown in 1975, half a point behind Petrosian.

He was a world championship Candidate twice, losing out to Andrei Sokolov in 1986 and to Lajos Portisch in 1988. It is estimated that he has won in excess of thirty tournaments in all. In January 2005, his Elo rating briefly reached a 21st century high at 2670, putting him back into the world's top 50, despite being in his mid-fifties.

Over the years, he has also won many medals in team competition, representing the Soviet Union and then Armenia in the Olympiads and European Team Championships, taking team bronze and individual gold for best performance on board 3 at the 2004 Calvia Olympiad, too.

In 1985, Alexey Suetin described him as a player with great natural gifts. Having played with him a number of times, he had sensed the Armenian's great powers of intuition - "He has a fine feeling of the dynamics of a chess battle and knows how to intensify the play at the right moment. He does not always calculate variants thoroughly, relying on his natural chess flair." Of Vaganian's volatile ideas at the chessboard, he added "... The feeling of fear or uncertainty is unknown to him. He is a perpetual optimist, full of ambitious intentions at every stage in every game, with an explosive temperament ..."