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Sensory Chess Challenger, 1982,  
[6502](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

**Chess Challenger**, or **Fidelity Chess Challenger**, was a series of [dedicated chess computers](#) produced and market by [Fidelity Electronics](#). The *Chess Challenger 1* was the first commercial chess computer of its kind in [1976](#), invented by [Sidney Samole](#), with a program by [Ron Nelson](#), developed for an [Altair 8800](#) Microcomputer with an [Intel 8080](#) CPU. Further versions of Nelson's program run on a more advanced [Z80](#) CPU, great commercial success was the *Chess Challenger 7* <sup>[1]</sup> in 1979. [Ed English](#), an early game programmer affiliated with Fidelity Electronics in 1979/80, improved the [alpha-beta](#) implementation to double the playing speed <sup>[2]</sup>.

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## Photos



Chess Challenger Prototype, 1976, [8080](#) <sup>[4]</sup>.

## Sargon becomes Challenger

In 1980, when [Dan](#) and [Kathe Spracklen](#) started to collaborate with Samole, a [6502](#) Version of Chess Challenger was built for a [Sargon III](#) port. The 6502 was better suited for Sargon than [Z80](#). Excerpt from their oral history how it went with Fidelity <sup>[5]</sup>:

So, that's about the time we started looking at Fidelity again. We got in contact with Sid Samole, who was the President of the company, and he said, "Well, come out and see us and bring your- what you got out there and show it to us." And so we got on a plane and flew out to Miami, and showed off our program to him. And they had their chief engineer, Ron Nelson, look at it, and they were impressed. And so they offered us a big contract, basically, to go to work for them, basically, fulltime. And we didn't have to go to Miami. We could stay in San Diego.

They had the Chess Challenger 1, I think, out at the time, or 2, and they were looking for something better. Our program, that we brought with us, just shellacked their program. We had a little tournament there, in Miami, just a little, between us, on our- the one we brought with us. And they were impressed.

And we continued to sell both through, or Sargon, through Hayden. So Fidelity didn't mind that. They said that's cool. They didn't see it as a competition with them.

## WMCCC 1980, MCC 1980

The immediate success was the lucky win of the [1st World Microcomputer Chess Championship](#), September 4 to 9, 1980, in London. Chess Challenger with a 6502 CPU, notably winning last three of five rounds against three of four other [Sargon](#) incarnations! While the [ICGA](#) tournament site states a Z80A CPU <sup>[6]</sup>, [Kevin O'Connell](#) reported the World Microcomputer Chess Champion was equipped with a [MOS Technology](#) processor, despite newest Fidelity computers were shipped with Z80/Z80A <sup>[7]</sup>. As further confirmed by Fidelity Electronics' Vice President [Myron Samole](#) in an [Personal Computing](#) interview, the Champion Sensory Challenger, which also won the [MCC 1980](#) at September 5 to 7 in [San Jose, California](#) had a program written around the 6502 chip <sup>[8]</sup>.

*Chess Challenger Sensory Voice* <sup>[10]</sup>, a [Z80](#) based Nelson Program as Micro Champ? <sup>[11]</sup>

Using the same name at almost the same time for programs with different authors and CPU architectures caused some confusion by potential customers, not to mention tournament organizers. Accordant to their product lineup and nomination, and caused by former tournament rules, permitting multiple, but different named entries from the same author, and commercial availability of participating computers, Fidelity Electronics somehow was "forced" to continue the naming obfuscation in further tournaments, where Fidelity computers with Spracklen programs participated as [Fidelity X](#), Challenger-X, [Elegance](#), [Elite](#), [Private Line](#), and [Sensory](#).

## Chess Challenger X

### ACM 1986

In 1986, at the [17th ACM North American Computer Chess Championship](#), Fidelity showed up with a huge experimental, parallel machine, named *Chess Challenger X*. Authors were [Ron Nelson](#), [Dan Spracklen](#), [Kathe Spracklen](#), and [Danny Kopec](#) as [Book author](#). It had a [Z80](#) controller, and 16 or more [68000](#) 16-bit processors. The controller was written in [C](#), the 16 or more Spracklen programs in [assembler](#) <sup>[16]</sup>.

Chess Challenger X scored 50%, losing from [Recom](#) and [Belle](#). Notably, in the same tournament, another Fidelity computer programmed by the Spracklens with a Kopec book took part, as [Fidelity Experimental](#) with a [68020](#) processor. It did not score better in that strong field and finally placed 10th.

### ACM 1988

At the [ACM 1988](#), the new experimental version of a [68030](#) based micro called *Chess Challenger X* showed a remarkable performance. Mentioned authors from the tournament report by [Monty Newborn](#) and [Danny Kopec](#) <sup>[17]</sup> were [Dan](#) and [Kathe Spracklen](#) as well as [Ron Nelson](#). The 32-bit program, written in 68030 [assembly](#) language, drew [Deep Thought](#) and won versus [Waycool](#), the current World Champion [Cray Blitz](#), and [HiTech](#). Chess Challenger X was likely the forerunner of the commercial available *Fidelity Elite Avant Garde V9* <sup>[18]</sup>. One year later, at the [WCCC 1989](#) in Edmonton, a similar machine, presumably with a further developed program, played under the name [Fidelity X](#) and finished sixth.

## CC Clones

- [Cassia Chess Mate](#)
- [SC 1](#)
- [SC 2](#)

## See also

- [Fidelity](#)
- [Fidelity Electronics](#)
- [Ron Nelson](#)
- [Sidney Samole](#)
- [Dan Spracklen](#)
- [Kathe Spracklen](#)
- [Spracklens with Apple II ICE](#)

## Publications

### 1978 ...

- Editor (1978). *Black-box war*. [Personal Computing, Vol. 2, No. 11](#), pp. 17, November 1978 » [Boris](#)
- Don Gerue, Russ McNeil (1979). *Chess Challenger-10 wins Microchess Tourney*. [Personal Computing, Vol. 3, No. 2](#), pp. 63 » [The Penrod Memorial Microchess Tournament](#)
- John Larkins (1979). *Inside Chess Challenger*. [Personal Computing, Vol. 3, No. 11](#), pp. 78
- Editor (1979). *Misadvantages of a Chess Traveler*. [Personal Computing, Vol. 3, No. 12](#), pp. 75

### 1980 ...

- [Sidney Samole](#) (1980). [Genius Offspring](#). [Changing Times](#), refers [Personal Computing, February 1979](#)
- [Evan Katz](#) (1980). *Chess Challenger's Voice comes out of Both Sides of its Mouth*. [Personal Computing, Vol. 4, No. 5](#), pp. 80
- [Harry Shershow](#) (1981). *The MyChess-CSC Confrontation at San Jose*. [Personal Computing, Vol. 5, No. 1](#), pp. 79 » [MCC 1980](#), Interviews with [David Kittinger](#) and [Mike Samole](#)
- [John F. White](#) (1981). [Survey-Chess Games](#). [Your Computer](#), August/September 1981
- [John F. White](#) (1982). [Review-Morphy V Champion](#). [Your Computer](#), January 1982
- [John F. White](#) (1982). [Review-Chess Computers](#). [Your Computer](#), March 1982

### 2000 ...

- [Rob van Son](#) (2002). *De schaakcomputer daagt u uit!*. [Computerschaak](#), pdf hosted by [Hein Veldhuis](#) (Dutch)

## Forum Posts

### 1998 ...

- [Re: Old chess challenger 7 algorithms](#) by [Fernando Villegas](#), [CCC](#), April 06, 1998
- [Something More About Chess Challenger 7](#) by [Fernando Villegas](#), [CCC](#), April 06, 1998
- [Fidelity Sensory Chess Challenger 8](#) by Jim Phillips, [CCC](#), September 20, 1998
- [Fidelity Chess Challenger 7](#) by Joseph R. Coppola, [CCC](#), January 21, 1999

## 2000 ...

- [Instruction Book For Fidelity Chess Challenger](#) by John Burton, [CCC](#), February 22, 2000
- [What was Chess Challenger 7 thinking?](#) by Rich Van Gaasbeck, [CCC](#), March 06, 2002
- [I Think I have Chess Challenger 7 search depths correctly now](#) by Rich Van Gaasbeck, [CCC](#), March 08, 2002
- [Fidelity Sensory Chess Challenger 8](#) by Eric Guttenberg, [CCC](#), February 20, 2005
- [Chess Champion Sensory Challenger Asked](#) by [Fernando Villegas](#), [CCC](#), March 06, 2006

## 2010 ...

- [Fidelity World Champion Challenger](#) by Larry, [Hiarcs Forum](#), December 03, 2013
- [Ron Nelsons dedicated chess computers](#) by [mclane](#), [Hiarcs Forum](#), April 26, 2015
- [Re: Ron Nelson](#) by [ChessChallenger](#), [Hiarcs Forum](#), December 29, 2015
- [Re: Ron Nelson](#) by Chessmaster Ireland, [Hiarcs Forum](#), January 02, 2016
- [Re: Ron Nelson Chess Challenger 10](#) by [ChessChallenger](#), [Hiarcs Forum](#), January 24, 2016
- [Re: Ron Nelson maybe will come here...](#) by [Ron Nelson](#), [CCC](#), February 03, 2016
- [Fidelity Chess Challenger 3 Components](#) by [ChessChallenger](#), [Hiarcs Forum](#), February 03, 2016

## External Links

- [Challenger's ICGA Tournaments](#)
- [Fidelity Electronics](#) from [chesscomputers.org](#)
- [Fidelity Champion Sensory Challenger Electronic Chess Computer](#) from [The Spacious Mind](#)
- [Fidelity Chess Challenger 1](#) from [Adam's Computer Chess Pages](#), May 30, 2012
- [Fidelity](#) from [Schachcomputer.info Wiki](#) (German)
- [Sargon immer noch Marktführer.: Mikros noch ohne Großmeister-Format](#), [Computerwoche](#), November 28, 1980 (German) » [WCCC 1980](#), [WMCCC 1980](#)

## Chess Challenger Voices

hosted by [Tom Luif](#)

- [English](#)
- [French](#)
- [German](#)

## Editions

Year	Product Link(s) <sup>[19]</sup> <sup>[20]</sup>	Author(s)	Processor	Tournaments
1977	<a href="#">Fidelity Chess Challenger 1</a>	<a href="#">Ron Nelson</a>	<a href="#">8080</a>	

	<a href="#">Fidelity Chess Challenger (CC1)</a> <a href="#">Fidelity Chess Challenger 1</a>			
	<a href="#">Fidelity Chess Challenger 3</a> <a href="#">Chess Challenger 3, CC1 vs CC3</a>	<a href="#">Ron Nelson</a>	<a href="#">8080</a> , 2 MHz	
1978	<a href="#">Fidelity Chess Challenger 10</a>	<a href="#">Ron Nelson</a>	<a href="#">Z80</a> , 4 MHz	
1979	<a href="#">Fidelity Chess Challenger 7</a>	<a href="#">Ron Nelson</a>	<a href="#">Z80</a>	
	<a href="#">Fidelity Chess Challenger Voice</a>	<a href="#">Ron Nelson</a>	<a href="#">Z80</a> , 4 MHz	
1980	<a href="#">Fidelity Voice Sensory Chess Challenger</a>	<a href="#">Ron Nelson</a>	<a href="#">Z80</a> , 4 MHz	
	<a href="#">Fidelity Decorator Challenger</a>	<a href="#">Ron Nelson</a>	<a href="#">Z80</a> , 4 MHz	
1981	<a href="#">Fidelity Chess Challenger Mini Sensory</a>	<a href="#">Ron Nelson</a>	<a href="#">80C50</a> , 6 MHz	
	<a href="#">Fidelity Champion Sensory Chess Challenger</a>	<a href="#">Dan</a> and <a href="#">Kathe Spracklen</a>	<a href="#">6502</a> , 2 MHz	<a href="#">WMCCC 1980</a> , 1st
1982	<a href="#">Fidelity Super 9 Sensory Chess Challenger</a> <a href="#">Fidelity Super 9</a>	<a href="#">Dan</a> and <a href="#">Kathe Spracklen</a>	<a href="#">6502</a> , 2 MHz	
	<a href="#">Fidelity USCF Special Edition</a> <a href="#">Fidelity USCF Special Edition</a>	<a href="#">Dan</a> and <a href="#">Kathe Spracklen</a>	<a href="#">6502</a> , 2.5 MHz	
1986	Chess Challenger X	<a href="#">Dan</a> and <a href="#">Kathe Spracklen</a>	<a href="#">Z80</a> , 16 x <a href="#">68000</a>	<a href="#">ACM 1986</a> , 7th





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<a href="#">68030</a>	Jun 7, 2016
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<a href="#">ACM 1981</a>	Jan 19, 2018
<a href="#">ACM 1986</a>	Dec 5, 2017
<a href="#">ACM 1988</a>	Dec 5, 2017
<a href="#">Alexander Bitman</a>	Jun 2, 2015
<a href="#">Applied Concepts</a>	Dec 25, 2017
<a href="#">Boris</a>	Dec 25, 2017
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<a href="#">Chess Challenger</a>	Dec 27, 2017
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<a href="#">Computerworld</a>	Sep 9, 2017
<a href="#">CPWTIPC 1981</a>	Oct 12, 2013
<a href="#">CXG Sensor Computachess</a>	Jun 23, 2017
<a href="#">Dan Spracklen</a>	Jan 17, 2017
<a href="#">David B. Goodrich</a>	Nov 9, 2015
<a href="#">Dedicated Chess Computers</a>	Feb 20, 2018
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<a href="#">Stockholm MCCT 1980</a>	Sep 5, 2017
<a href="#">Stockholm MCCT 1981</a>	Oct 12, 2013
<a href="#">Terry Everett</a>	Dec 1, 2017
<a href="#">The Penrod Memorial Microchess Tournament</a>	Dec 22, 2017
<a href="#">United States Open Computer Chess Championship</a>	Dec 2, 2017
<a href="#">USOCCC 1986</a>	Dec 1, 2017
<a href="#">VEB Mikroelektronik Erfurt</a>	Oct 27, 2013
<a href="#">Viktor</a>	Jan 8, 2016
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