

6TH LONDON CHESS CLASSIC (6-14 DECEMBER 2014)

CLASSIC ROUND 4: 14 DECEMBER 2014

YOU'VE JUST BEEN SPACEBARRED

With one round to go (starting at 2pm on Sunday), the Classic is nicely poised with five of the six players still able to finish first. Round four featured just the one decisive result, with Hikaru Nakamura beating Mickey Adams, which makes the scores as follows: Kramnik and Giri 6, Nakamura 5, Anand and Adams 4, Caruana 3.

One of the great things about an international chess tournament is the exchange of ideas between people from different countries and cultures. From the beginning, the London Chess Classic has placed a great deal of importance on invitees putting in as positive a performance in the commentary room as they do at the board. Top chessplayers are highly intelligent people and have quickly realised that their livelihood depends as much on their ability to communicate as to play good moves.

Consequently we now have a young generation of players with the confidence to innovate off the board linguistically as well as on it. Not just those who have English as their first language, either. It's gratifying for us native Brits to have our language adopted worldwide as the first language of chess, but perhaps a bit scary too. As with our other notable export, football, where we have had to learn to endure other countries playing it a lot better than we do, we now have to live with people from non-English speaking countries being more articulate and creative in English than we are.



Anish Giri is a very personable, confident young man who is fluent in a number of languages. On stage he converses with the chief arbiter Albert Vasse in Dutch, with Vlad Kramnik in Russian and with the rest of us in fluent English. Like other super-GMs he likes to use English in a creative, playful way. I am reminded of our own Jon Speelman, former Candidate and one-time world number four, who also enjoys coining whimsical words in a chess context. For example, in Speelspeak, 'zugzwang' becomes 'Volkswagen' (don't ask me why); and he and other English titled players will say something like 'Re4 is box here'. In this context, 'box' is a reference to the Informator symbol that looks like a box and

means 'forced'.

Now we have a younger generation of super-GMs whose cultural references derive from ChessBase rather than Informator. Consequently you might hear the likes of Hikaru Nakamura and Anish Giri using the word 'spacebar' as a noun or verb. Anish was quoted by chess24.com yesterday as saying "I thought that, unlike Magnus, I can spacebar you in this, but apparently I can't do it either... so what to do?" Here 'to spacebar' means something like 'to play the analysis engine's first choice move'. I have noticed, by the way, that one or two new moves in the tournament corresponded to Houdini's first move, indicating that players are being influenced by the analysis engine's recommendations in the opening. I guess this is nothing new but perhaps becoming more prevalent.

AN ITALIAN JOB WELL DONE

One nice human story got us off to a good start in round four. Two Italian boys had travelled all the way from Italy to see their hero, Fabiano Caruana, yesterday, and eagerly sought his autograph. Not only did they get it but Malcolm Pein was able to arrange for them to make the ceremonial move on Fabiano's board. Fabiano was Black in the game so they actually made Vlad Kramnik's move against him. They chose 1.d4. Asked by Malcolm whether he was happy

for the move to stand, Vlad smiled and said that he was. And so say all of us, for the simple reason that 1.d4 eliminates the possibility of the Berlin Defence. So well done, those two little Italian boys, and I'm glad to add that 1.d4 also appeared on the other two boards, and indeed the fourth game of the Jones-Edouard match.



Kramnik-Caruana was drawn after 35 moves. The chief interest came in a carefully-calculated temporary sacrifice by Black to secure an extra pawn, but it was played more to ensure equality. White was able to exchange down to a drawn endgame quite quickly. At the post-mortem Fabiano, now the only player out of



the running for first prize, sounded a little despondent: "Since the first round I've played pretty dull games". He is perhaps a little over-chessed at the moment. One imagines he will come back stronger in 2015 and will soon rediscover the form he showed in the middle part of 2014.

Round 4

V.Kramnik (2769) - F.Caruana (2829)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bg5 Ne4 6.Bf4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 c5 8.cxd5 Qxd5 9.e3 cxd4 10.cxd4 0-0 11.Be2 Qa5+ 11...Nc6 was played by Gelfand against Kramnik at the Petrosian Memorial tournament a month or so ago. **12.Qd2 Qxd2+**



12...Nc6 has been more popular at the super-GM level. **13.Kxd2 Nc6 14.Rhc1 Rd8 15.Rc5 Bf5** A game from the 1960 Leipzig Olympiad was abandoned as a draw here. Otherwise no database game has ever reached this position before. **16.Rac1 Be4 17.Bd3 Bd5 18.Bc4** Kramnik now considered the move **18.e4?!** allowing **18...Bxa2** and then he mentioned a possible continuation **19.d5 Nb4 20.Rb5 a5** when he thought White had insufficient compensation for the pawn. **18...Bxf3 18...Bxc4!?** **19.R1xc4 e5 20.Nxe5 Nxe5 21.Bxe5 b6** looks quite good for Black, but on move 20 White could probably equalise with the exchange sac **20.Rxc6!?** **21.Nxe5 Bxe5 22.Bxe5 Rac8**, etc. **19.gxf3 (diagram) 19...Nxd4!** Quite a long and complex combination to secure equality. **20.exd4 Rxd4+ 21.Ke3 Rxf4! 22.Kxf4 Bh6+ 23.Rg5 Kf8** Preparing ...f6, of course. **24.Kg4 f6 25.f4 fxe5 26.fxe5 Bg7 27.Be6** White is now a pawn down but with much the better bishop and general configuration giving him full compensation. After **27.Bd5 Rd8 28.Bxb7 Rd4+ 29.f4 Be5** Black is a bit better. **27...Be5 28.h4 Kg7 29.h5 gxh5+ 30.Kxh5 Rf8 31.Rc8** With the rooks off it becomes a drawn opposite-coloured bishop endgame. **31...Rxc8 32.Bxc8 b5 33.Ba6 b4 34.Kg4 h6 35.gxh6+ 1/2-1/2**

"We liked your play, Vishy... at least, up to a point" was Nigel Short's greeting to the 15th world champion in the commentary room after his game against Anish Giri. I wonder if Nigel meant this in the Evelyn Waugh sense. In Waugh's satirical novel *Scoop*, there is a called Lord Copper who is a newspaper magnate. One of his editors, when agreeing with him, tends to say "definitely, Lord Copper" – but when disagreeing with him, can only bring himself to say "up to a point, Lord Copper". So, I wonder, did Nigel really like Vishy's play.

The game began with a Queen's Gambit Accepted, specifically a line where White gives up a pawn to get an initiative. White achieved this objective but it never quite looked as though anything tangible would come of it. But it was quite an interesting game nonetheless.

Round

V.Anand (2793) - A.Giri (2768)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.e4 Bb4 6.Bxc4 Nxe4 7.0-0 The position has a curious affinity to the line in the Giuoco Piano where White similarly gives up a pawn (or pawns) to get an initiative. It's all been played before, of course. **7...Nxc3 8.bxc3 Be7** Capturing with **8...Bxc3** is only for the naive, and after **9.Rb1 0-0? 10.Qd3 Ba5 11.Ng5 g6 12.Qh3 h5 13.g4** Black is really struggling. **9.Ne5 0-0 10.Qg4 Nc6 11.Re1 f5 12.Qf3 Nxe5 13.Rxe5 Kh8 14.h3** A new move. Several moves have been tried here,

with most games being drawn. 14.Bf4 g5 15.Bd2 Bd6 16.Rae1! Bxe5 17.Rxe5 Qf6 18.h4 was the lively continuation of a match game between Topalov and Laznicka in 2013 but it too ended in a draw. **14...Bd6 15.Re2 h6 16.Bd2 Qe7 17.Rae1 Rf6 18.Bb3 a5 19.c4 a4 20.Bc2 Bb4 21.Bc3** 21.c5 came in for consideration: 21...Bxd2 22.Rxd2 c6 23.Qc3 Qc7 "looks ugly for Black but I didn't think I had a breakthrough" (Vishy) **21...Bxc3 22.Qxc3 Bd7 23.d5 Qd6 24.Re5 exd5 25.Rxd5 Qc6 26.Qb4 Be6** 26...b6! is possible since 27.Re7 is answered by 27...Be6 now, and the rook is rather stranded. **27.Rc5** White's pressure against the black queenside pawns gives him compensation for the pawn. **27...Qb6 28.Rb1** 28.Rb5 Qd4 29.Rxb7 c5 30.Qb1 Qxc4 31.Rb6 is unclear. **28...Bg8 29.Rxf5 Qxb4 30.Rxb4 Rxf5 31.Bxf5 a3!**



(diagram)

"At least this made White think" (Nigel Short). Now the c4-pawn needs to be retained in situ as the capture of the a2-pawn would turn Black's a3 pawn into a monstrous passed pawn. **32.Bd3 Rd8 33.Rb3 b5 34.Rxa3 Bxc4 35.Bxc4 bxc4 36.Rc3 Rd1+ 37.Kh2 Rd2 38.a4 Rxf2 39.Rxc4 Ra2 40.Kg3 Kh7 41.Kf3 Kg6 42.h4 c5 43.Rxc5 Rxa4 1/2-1/2**

Mickey Adams was in trouble from quite soon after the start of his game with Hikaru Nakamura. He steered for a rook endgame a pawn down, with pawns all on the same side of the board, but a further inaccuracy cost him dear. He has faded after a strong start in the tournament but still has a chance of the top prize. Meanwhile Hikaru Nakamura has bounced back well from his earlier defeat at the hands of Kramnik and, with the benefit of the 3-1-0 scoring system, can yet leapfrog over the leaders if they draw their last round game and he wins his. This was a very encouraging game for the US number one, particularly as Mickey Adams is notoriously hard to beat.



Round 4

H.Nakamura (2775) - M.Adams (2745)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Bg5 Be7 5.Qc2 h6 6.Bxf6 6.Bh4 was Topalov's choice against Adams at the FIDE Grand Prix in London in 2012. The game was drawn. **6...Bxf6** It may seem surprising but only a couple of obscure games have ever reached this position. This is probably because White nearly always develops his b1 knight to c3 early in QGD games. **7.e3 c5!** The commentators expected 7...0-0. With hindsight it might have been the safer choice. **8.cxd5 cxd4 9.Bb5+ Bd7 10.dxe6! Qa5+** The first point to note here is that 10...Bxb5 is answered by 11.exf7+ and, wherever the king goes, White will be able to check with the queen and recapture the b5 bishop, with some (albeit minor) material interest. **11.Nbd2 Qxb5** Nigel Short tried to conjure up a fantasy sacrificial line along the lines of 11...Bxb5

12.Qc8+ Ke7 (12...Qd8 13.Qxb7 threatening Qxf7 mate and Qxb5+ is the main point here) **13.Qxh8 Nd7 14.Qxa8 Nc5** to entertain the audience, but admitted he couldn't make it work. **12.exd7+ Nxd7 13.Qe4+ Kf8 14.Nxd4 Qxb2** 14...Qa6 is a possible alternative, preventing White from castling but of course Black will remain a pawn down with his own king awkwardly placed. **15.Rb1 Qxa2 16.Qxb7 Rd8** Hikaru thought 16...Rb8 was better and then **17.Qxd7 Rxb1+ 18.Nxb1 Qxb1+ 19.Ke2 Qb2+ (19...Qxh1?? is refuted by the attractive 20.Qc8+ Ke7 21.Nf5 mate) 20.Kf3 g6** with a likely draw. **17.Qb4+ Kg8 18.0-0 a5 19.Qc3 Qd5 20.Qc7 Nf8 21.Rb5 Qd7 22.Qxd7 Rxd7 23.N2f3 Bxd4 24.Nxd4 Ne6 25.Nxe6 fxe6 26.Rxa5 Kf7 27.g4**

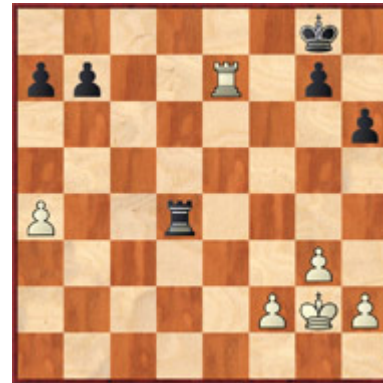


27...Rc8 "After this it gets really difficult" (Nakamura) "I want to place my king on g3 and go h4, h5" **28.Rb1 Rc2 29.Ra8 Rc4 30.h3 h5?** "This just loses" (Nakamura) Perhaps 30...Rdc1 is more resilient. **31.gxh5 Rh4 32.Rh8 Kf6 33.Kh2! Rd5 34.Rf8+ Ke7 35.Rf3 Rf5 35...Rhxh5 36.Rb7+ Rd7 37.Rxd7+ Kxd7 38.Rf7+ wins. 36.Rxf5 exf5 37.Rg1 Kf6 38.Rg6+ Kf7 39.Rg5 Kf6** After this the rook gets buried alive. 39...f4 is the only move but it probably doesn't help much: 40.Rg4 Rxh5 41.Rxf4+ with two extra pawns. **40.f4 1-0** White simply plays Kg3 and Kxh4.

Apologies for neglecting the Jones-Edouard match somewhat over the past couple of days. Gawain Jones pointed out to me last night the similarity between positions in the third and fourth games of the match. Game three went down to the kings, while in game four the players, having sampled each other's rook and pawn endgame technique, decided to call it quits rather earlier and proceed to dinner. Here are two remarkably similar positions from the two games:



Jones - Edouard, Game 3
Position after 38.h4



Edouard - Jones, Game 4
Position after 32.Re7 (end of game)



Gawain Jones retains his one-point lead from the initial game, with Romain still having two games left to do something about it. They play the fifth game at Olympia on Sunday, and the sixth game at the Hampstead tournament on Monday.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: the Saturday and Sunday rounds start **two hours earlier** than the previous three, at 2pm UK time.

For information on the event, please e-mail us at info@londonchessclassic.com

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