

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

### CLASSIC ROUND 5: 15 DECEMBER 2014

Vishy Anand won the 6th London Chess Classic on tie-break from Vladimir Kramnik and Anish Giri after defeating Mickey Adams with the black pieces in the final round on Sunday. Final scores in tie-break order: 1 Anand 7, 2 Kramnik 7, 3 Giri 7, 4 Nakamura 6, 5 Adams 4, 6 Caruana 4.



It speaks volumes for the character of the man that he was able to bounce back from the disappointment of Sochi a few weeks ago to take this prestigious title in London. And prestige is a two-way street: Vishy Anand's name on the trophy adds lustre to the London Chess Classic and means that all three world champions active during the tournament's existence have now won it. Vishy's win on tie-break is karmic compensation for losing out to Magnus Carlsen on tie-break in 2010 despite defeating him in the tournament. Given that the event has now been in existence for five years and six events, it might be timely to publish our roll of honour: 2009 and 2010 Magnus Carlsen; 2011 Vlad Kramnik; 2012

Magnus Carlsen; 2013 Hikaru Nakamura; and now, 2014, Vishy Anand. You'd be hard pushed to find another 21st century tournament with a list of winners as impressive as that.

### THE BERLIN WALL HAS FALLEN – BUT THE TOWER OF LONDON STILL STANDS

The 3-1-0 scoring system ensured that the outcome was in doubt right down to the final result. Things looked a little ominous at the start as two Berlin Defences appeared on the board. But perhaps we've been a bit too quick to condemn the modern super-GM's all-purpose antidote to 1.e4 as it produced the one decisive result of the round, and indeed decide the destination of the trophy.

Incidentally, there was one interesting exchange in the commentary room after the Adams-Anand game. Nigel Short told Vishy that "There were some inner groans when the Berlin was played." Vishy shot back "by now it can just be called the London!" Do you know, he's got a very good point: given that 3...Nf6 against the Ruy Lopez played a vitally important role in Vladimir Kramnik wresting the world title from Garry Kasparov in 2000, and now Vishy Anand's use of the same line to win with Black and thus secure the 2014 London Classic title, there is a strong case for renaming it the London defence to the Ruy Lopez/Spanish. Or, if you like, the Tower of London rather than the Berlin Wall. For me the clincher is that Vishy says so: if the Tsar of Russia had the right to name the first grandmasters, then a world champion should have the privilege of naming opening variations anyway he chooses.



The Adams-Anand game was the first to finish. Having given our heartiest congratulations to Vishy, we must also pass on our heartfelt commiserations to Mickey Adams, whose tournament started so well but ended so disappointingly, with losses in the last two rounds. His fourth round loss was grim but he had reasonable chances in the fifth game. If things had turned out differently, he might easily have been the man receiving the plaudits instead

of Vishy as a win for him in this final game would have won him the tournament on tie-break. *Sic transit gloria Olympiae.*



#### Round 5

#### M.Adams (2745) - V.Anand (2793)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6** Vishy opts for the Tower of London (and you can tell I'm determined to make this name change stick). **4.0-0 Nxe4 5.d4 Nd6 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 Nf5 8.Qxd8+ Kxd8 9.h3 Ke8 10.Nc3** Those of us privileged to listen to GM Julian Hodgson's commentaries in the VIP room had the benefit of his homily on the (ahem) London Defence the other day. He was pointing out one of the downsides from the white point of view - the e5-pawn. As Julian put it, the pawn doesn't really want to be on e5, where it sticks out like a sore thumb and allows Black's pieces to position themselves comfortably all around it. Back to the game... **10...h5 11.Rd1** In the seventh game in Sochi, Carlsen attempted to storm Vishy's battlements with 11.Bf4 but did not succeed. This was the game that came down to rook and knight versus rook and was 100+ moves in length. **11...Be7 12.g3** One of the rarer options. 12.Ne2 and 12.Bg5 are generally played here. **12...b6 13.a4 Bb7** 13...a5 14.Bf4 Rg8 15.Ng5 Bb7 16.Rd3 Ba6 was played in Efimenko-Bacrot in the Bundesliga two years ago and also won by Black. **14.a5!** Taking advantage of the absence of the precautionary 13...a5. The VIP room GMs had already been advocating this move. **14...c5** Preparing the text move with 14...Rd8 has something to be said for it. **15.Nd5 Bd8** Giving up a pawn with 15...Rd8!? was a line looked at by spectating GMs: 16.Nxc7+ Kf8 17.Rxd8+ Bxd8 18.axb6 axb6 19.Ne1! Bc6 (19...Bxc7 20.Ra7 regains the piece with a modicum of interest) 20.Na6 Ke7 gives Black some compensation. **16.Bg5 Rf8** (diagram)



Not as mysterious as Giri's strange Rc8 in a similar position the other day. Black intends to push away the g5 bishop with f7-f6. **17.c4?!** One or two watching GMs criticised this. The best way to see why is to look at the line after 17.c3!? Bxd5 18.Rxd5 Bxg5 19.axb6 cxb6 20.Nxg5 Ke7 where Black can no longer put a knight on d4 and consequently remains somewhat worse as he can't challenge on the d-file because of potentially loose pawns on a7 and f7. **17...Bxd5 18.Rxd5** 18.cxd5 Bxg5 19.axb6 cxb6 20.Nxg5 Nd4 21.Kg2 is unclear. **18...Bxg5 19.Nxg5** White has time to slip in 19.axb6!? first: 19...cxb6 (one key tactical point is that Black doesn't have time to keep the captured piece: 19...Be7?? 20.Rxa7! wins; 19...c6 20.Rxa7 Rb8 21.Rdd7 Bd8 22.Rdb7 Rxb7 23.Rxb7 and again the monster passed pawn compensates for the sacrificed piece) 20.Nxg5 Ke7 21.Kg2 h4 22.g4 Nd4 **19...Ke7 20.Kg2 Nd4!** Black has equalised. **21.Rd1 Rad8 22.Nf3 c6 23.Rxd8** 23.Rd6 Rxd6 24.exd6+ Kxd6 25.b4 Kc7 26.Nxd4 cxd4 27.Rxd4 bxa5 28.bxa5 is also equal. **23...Rxd8 24.Ng5 b5 25.cxb5 cxb5 26.Ne4 Nc6 27.Rxd8 Kxd8 28.e6?** A serious misjudgement; GM heads (particularly English ones) were beginning to shake when they saw this. 28.Nxc5 Nxe5 is probably a fraction better for Black; the best move is probably 28.f4 when 28...Nxa5 29.Nxc5 Kc7 30.Kf3 Kc6 and now 31.e6 seems to make sense. **28...fxe6 29.Nxc5 Ke7** The problem now is that White's is slightly more vulnerable to the black king's attack than vice versa. And, as so often in the endgame, a slight problem soon escalates into being an insoluble one. **30.Nb3 Kd6 31.Kf3 Kd5** (diagram)



To defend or counterattack? Mickey had about five minutes plus increments to make nine moves. **32.Kf4?** The wrong answer. He had to try defending with 32.Ke3 when 32...Kc4 33.Nd2+ Kb4 34.a6! could be holding, though Black has other tries, such as 32...Ne5!? or the consolidating 32...a6. White now subsides rather quickly. **32...Kc4 33.Nc1** 33.Nd2+ Kd3! 34.Nb3 Kc2 wins for Black. **33...Nxa5 34.Kg5** 34.Ke3 Nc6 35.Kd2 a5 looks fairly hopeless as well. **34...Nb3 35.Ne2 b4 36.Kxh5 a5 0-1** Black can't get anywhere near the path of the a-pawn to stop it marching through.

"Two Berlins and a Catalan!" was the world-weary comment from a number of spectators – as if the Catalan could be as boring as a Berlin... sorry, I was forgetting... a London. But Giri-Kramnik, and its Catalan, had a few moments of interest in the lead-up to the time control, when both players had to figure out some tactics, and also come to terms with seeing a decisive result in the Adams-

Anand seriously impact their chances of lifting the trophy. In the end Kramnik was the player pressing but he did not have enough in the bishop endgame. Giri was probably content with joint first place (but third on tie-break) on his first appearance in the London Classic.

## Round 5

### A.Giri (2768) - V.Kramnik (2769)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.g3** Playing the Catalan against its most celebrated practitioner seems akin to Lèse-majesté.

**4...Be7 5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 7.Qc2 a6 8.Qxc4 b5 9.Qc2 Bb7**

**10.Bd2 Be4 11.Qc1 c6** Until here the players follow the most frequently played line of the Catalan, but this is less often played than 11...Bb7. Kramnik will have particularly happy memories of the latter line as he used it to halve out the 15th and final game of the 2000 world title match, just a mile away from Olympia, to become 14th world chess champion. **12.a4 Nbd7** A handful of games have arrived here before but all continued 12...b4 13.Be3 Nbd7 14.Nbd2 Bd5 before diverging.

**13.Nc3** Giri decides to make use of a move that would have been denied had Kramnik followed 'book'. **13...Bg6 14.Ne5** The most logical way to exploit Black's light-squared bishop's absence from the long diagonal. However, that line of attack soon becomes blocked and, if anything, the light-squared bishop on g6 plays more of a part in the game than its white counterpart.

**14...Nxe5 15.dxe5 Nd5 16.axb5 axb5 17.Nxd5 cxd5 18.Rxa8 Qxa8** It is noticeable that the players only took a few minutes to rap out the moves to around here, so they were either well-prepared or wanted to appear so. **19.Qc7 Re8 20.Rc1 b4 21.Bf3** Contemplating an advance of the h-pawn to harass the g6-bishop. **21...h6 22.Kg2 b3 23.Qd7 23.Rc6!?** is a possibility, pre-empting the separation of queen and rook via Bc2. **23...Bc2 24.Ra1 Qc8 25.Qa4 Qb8 26.e4 d4!?** 26...dxe4 27.Bxe4 Rc8 is playable but Black prefers to sacrifice a pawn to keep the light-squared bishop under lock and key. Besides, the doubled extra pawn is largely worthless. **27.Qxd4 Rd8 28.Qc3 Qb7 28...Rd3!?** 29.Qa5 Bd8 30.Qb4 Qxb4 31.Bxb4 Bc7 probably doesn't change the assessment. **29.Be1 Rc8 30.Ra7 Qxa7 31.Qxc8+ Kh7 32.Qc4 Bc5** Now both white bishops are immobilised. Giri later described it as 'rather an ugly game' and he probably wasn't enjoying the constrictor treatment from big Vlad. **33.Be2 Bd4** Threatening both e-pawns. **34.Bd3** (diagram)



**34...Qa1!?** Despite time trouble, Kramnik injects a small tactical element into the game. **34...Bxd3 35.Qxd3 Qa4 36.Bc3 Bxc3 37.Qxc3 Qxe4+** forces the win of the pawn but is a draw. **35.Qxd4 35.Bxc2??** loses material to **35...bxc2 36.Bd2 Qd1!**, etc. **35...Qxe1 36.Bc4 Bxe4+ 37.f3 Bc2 38.Bd3+ g6 39.Bc4 g5 40.g4 h5!?** Still trying to find something to imbalance the game. **41.gxh5 41.Bxe6** more or less forces a draw: **41...Qe2+ (41...fxe6 42.Qd7+ Kh6 43.Qxe6+ Bg6 44.gxh5, etc) 42.Kg1 Qxf3 43.Bd5** is equal. **41...Kh6 42.Qd8 Qxe5 43.Qf8+ Qg7 44.Qxg7+ Kxg7 45.h4 Kh6 46.hxg5+ Kxh5 47.Kf2 Kxg5 48.Ke3 Kf5 49.f4** Despite his extra pawn, it is now easy to see that Black can make no progress if White simply leaves his king on e3 and shuffles around sensibly with his bishop. **49...Kg4 50.Bb5 Kf5 51.Bc4 Kg6 52.Kf2 Kf6 53.Kf3 Kg6 54.Kf2 Bd1 55.Ke3 Kf5 56.Bb5 Kg4 57.Be8 f6 58.Bd7 Kf5 59.Bb5 Bc2 60.Bd7 Bb1 1/2-1/2**

The other day I was toying with a medical analogy for the defence formerly known as Berlin. It's like cholesterol. Most people think of cholesterol as a bad thing but doctors will tell you that there is good and bad cholesterol (although they would probably use less simplistic language than a layman such as me). In the same way, there are good and bad Berlins. Unfortunately, the one I'm about to show you is (from the entertainment point of view) a bad one. One or two flashes of grandmasterly dexterity, perhaps – a well-conceived exchange sac, certainly. But not enough scope for that commodity which makes a chess game worth watching: namely, mistakes. The players played too darned well. Here it is anyway.



## Round 5

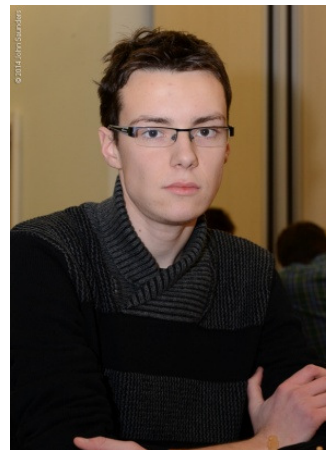
### F.Caruana (2829) - H.Nakamura

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6** Even Hikaru plays the defence formerly known as Berlin... **4.0-0 Nxe4 5.d4 Nd6 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 Nf5 8.Qxd8+ Kxd8 9.h3 Ke8 10.Nc3 Be6** A less popular line, but played by Naiditsch and Elyanov, amongst others. **11.g4 Ne7 12.Nd4 Bd7 13.Re1 h5 14.e6 fxe6 15.Nxe6 Bxe6 16.Rxe6 Kd7 16...hxg4 17.hxg4 Kd7 17.Re2 hxg4 18.hxg4 Ng6 19.Bg5 Bd6 20.Ne4 Rh7 20...Rh3 21.Re3 Rxe3 22.Bxe3 Ne5 23.Rd1 Re8** was Georgiadis-Iordachescu, Rethymnon 2010, and won by Black. **21.Nxd6 cxd6 22.f4 Rah8 23.Rae1** The doubled rooks on the h-file look menacing but there is no specific threat to speak of. **23...c5 24.a4 a6 25.Rg2 Rh3 26.Re4 b5 27.axb5 axb5 28.f5 Ne5 29.Bf4 Nf3+ 30.Kf1 g5 31.fxg6 Rg8 32.Rge2**

**Nd4** 32...Rxc6? would be careless as 33.Kg2! forks two pieces. Black could rescue himself to a degree with 33...Rxc4+ 34.Kxh3 Rxf4! 35.Rxf4 Ng1+ 36.Kg4 Nxe2 but White would still have a possibly winning advantage. **33.Re7+ Kc6** (diagram)



33...Kd8 34.Ra7 Rxc6 35.Rf2 sets up a crafty mate in two threat (Bg5+ and then Rf8 mate) but 35...Rf3 holds the balance. **34.Kg2!**? White is now more or less obliged to sacrifice the exchange for a pawn but he gets a very decent position for it. **34...Rh4 35.Kg3 Rh1** 35...Nxe2+ 36.Rxe2 Rh1 37.Re6 Rd1 38.Rf6 is broadly similar to the game. **36.R2e6 Nxe6 37.Rxe6 Kd5 38.Rxd6+ Ke4 39.Re6+ Kd5 40.Re5+ Kd4** Now a long dour struggle ensues, with only White having realistic chances of success but then only marginally. Only a major blunder by Caruana could now affect the destination of first prize. **41.Rg5 Ke4 42.Re5+ Kd4 43.c3+ Kc4 44.Be3 Rxc6 45.Rxc5+ Kd3 46.Bf2 Rgh6 47.g5 R6h3+ 48.Kg4 R3h2 49.Rd5+ Kc2 50.Bd4 Kxb2 51.Rxb5+ Kc2 52.Kf5 Rg2 53.Kf6 Rh3 54.Rc5 Rhg3 55.Kg6 Kd3 56.Bf6 Rg1 57.Rc8 R3g2 58.Kf5 Rf1+ 59.Ke6 Rfg1 60.Rc5 Re2+ 61.Kf7 Reg2 62.Kg6 Rg3 63.Bd4 R1g2 64.Bf6 Rg1 65.Rc7 R3g2 66.Rc8 Rg3 67.c4 Rg4 68.c5 Kc4 69.Be7 Re4 70.Bf6 Kd5 71.c6 Kd6 72.Kf7 Rf4 73.Kg7 Rc4 74.Kf7 Rxc6 75.Rd8+ Kc7 76.Rf8 Rf1 77.Kg7 Kd7 78.Rf7+ Ke6 79.Re7+ Kf5 80.Re5+ Kg4 81.Kg6 Rc4 1/2-1/2**



The Jones-Edouard encounter saw its fourth successive (and rather uneventful) draw, so they transfer to the Hampstead Congress for their last game on Monday. You'll have to look to someone else to bring you up to date on that as I'm going on my Christmas holidays. Before I go, there's just time to mention the FIDE Open. It ended in a tie for first place between GM Kamil Dragun (Poland) and IM Jinshi Bai (China) on 7½/9, ahead of six players on 7. The two winners recorded TPRs in excess of 2700, so, for Jinshi Bai it means a GM norm.

That's about it from me. Hope you've enjoyed my coverage of the event, and the tournament itself, which has been a lot of fun. Here's hoping we do it all again next year. Happy Christmas and New Year to one and all.

John Saunders

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