



Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival 2017

Monday 23 January - Thursday 2 February 2017

Round 7 Report: Monday 30 January 2017 - by John Saunders (@JohnChess)

Hou Loves Ya, Baby

Once again there was an impressive percentage of decisive games amongst the top boards – 14 out of the top 20 – and we now have four players on the leading score of 6/7: Hikaru Nakamura (USA), Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (France), David Anton Guijarro (Spain) and Yu Yangyi (China). Antoaneta Stefanova (Bulgaria) is now the front runner for the women's prize with 5½ but Hou Yifan stole the limelight with a spectacular win against Borya Ider of France.



Anton Guijarro v Nakamura soon fizzled out to a draw

One surprise was a bloodless encounter on the top board where last year's winner Hikaru Nakamura had Black against David Anton Guijarro. This ended in an early repetition. Nakamura usually plays on to the bitter edge so it was unusual to see him acquiesce to a draw so soon against a considerably lower rated player but perhaps he felt in need of an easier round to help recharge his batteries.

On board two Mickey Adams' splendid run of form was brought to a halt by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Since beating the Frenchman twice in 2013, Adams' record against him has gone downhill somewhat. He tried a Berlin, against which MVL innovated with 15.a4, gradually increasing his grip positionally. Adams fought a desperate rearguard but never really got back on terms.



Mickey Adams' Berlin Wall was breached by MVL

A second surprise, for me anyway, is that we saw a real game between the two Bulgarian players, Veselin Topalov and Ivan Cheparinov, given that the latter has worked closely with his illustrious fellow countryman on so many occasions. It ended in a draw but it was hard fought, with Cheparinov seeming to have a slight edge for much of its course. Perhaps they have a mini-rivalry at Gibraltar, where Topalov has so far failed to match his younger colleague's achievement in winning the tournament.



The two Bulgarian stars Igor Cheparinov and Veselin Topalov played a real game

Valentin Dragnev of Austria was much the lowest rated player to reach a score of 5/6 but his splendid run was ended by Yu Yangyi. The Austrian failed to find a way to crack open his opponent's central pawn structure, which might have allowed him some counterplay against the Chinese GM's queenside attack, which proved the decisive factor.



Yu Yangyi and Valentin Dragnev are interviewed by Tania Sachdev after the game

Nigel Short played a French Defence against Peter Svidler. Things seemed to be going White's way but had turned around slightly by the time they agreed a draw. It was only after the game that the players were shown a winning double bishop sacrifice available to White a few moves before the end that only a computer (or a computer cheat) might be expected to find. Nobody could criticise a human player for not finding this but it's worth looking at purely for its aesthetic interest.



A well fought draw between Svidler and Short but the computer found a remarkable chance for White

Tradewise Gibraltar Masters, Round 7, 30.01.2017

P.Svidler (2748) - N.Short (2675)



Black has just played 27...Bxh2 and the game continuation was **28.Bb5** leading to a draw a few moves later. Instead the computer suggests 28.Qe6+ Kg7 (28...Kh8 meets the same reply) 29.Bb5!! Rxb5 - not much choice other than to accept the sacrifice since otherwise White gains the d4 square for a lethal check with his bishop on the long diagonal - 30.Bf8+!! Kxf8 (30...Kh8 31.Bh6 and mate in a further three moves) 31.Qf6+ Qf7 32.Qh8+ Qg8 33.Rf1+ Ke7 34.Qxg8 and White will win easily.

Boris Gelfand returned to winning ways with a nice trick at the end of his game with Sebastien Mazé.

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B.Gelfand (2721) - S.Maze (2613)

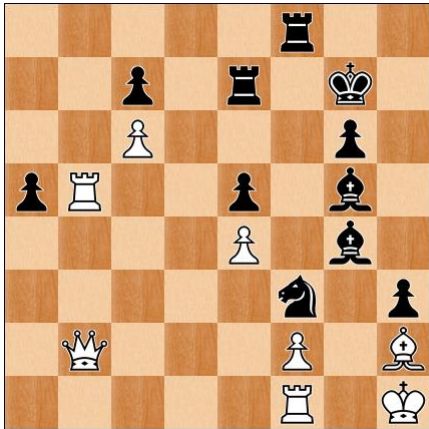


Here White had set a deadly trap by checking with his rook on g2 and returning to g4. Black has a choice of returning to h2 with his king to h2 or equalising the material. He makes the wrong choice. **55...Nxa2?** After 55...Kh2 56.a4 Nxb3 57.axb5 Nd2+ 58.Ke2 Rxb5 59.Kxd2 is a drawn R+B v R endgame according to the tablebase. The text leads to a win for White. **56.Bg3! Nc3** 56...Rh3 57.Be5! Rf3+ 58.Ke2 Rf5 59.Bf4 and White mates (or wins material) as in the game. **57.Bf4 1-0** 57...Ne2 is the only way to stop the immediate mate but White has 58.Kxe2 Rc5 59.Kf1 and soon mates anyway.

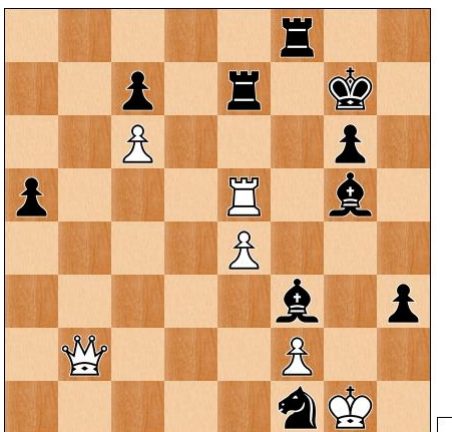
GAME OF THE TOURNAMENT?

Hou Yifan played a truly astonishing game against the French IM Borya Ider. First she went in for an unusual queen sacrifice for which the material return was only two minor pieces and a pawn, but she had seen further and realised that she could maintain a positional grip almost indefinitely. Then she crowned the achievement by coolly ignoring what looked like a devastating double check which would cost her a rook and allow her opponent to pursue her king up the board with queen and rook. Again, she had seen further and worked out that her king was headed for a safe haven on g4, and that her own less obviously lethal counter had a sting in the tail. This remarkable game must be in the running for the £1,000 best game prize.

board blockade but Hou Yifan is still not biting. **29...Nf3+ 30.Kg2 dxc5 31.bxc5 h5** Black reveals part of her simple plan: to advance the h-pawn in order to win back material or perhaps give mate. **32.Qa2+ Kh7 33.Qd5 Rae8 34.Qc6 Re7 35.Rd3** 35.axb5 axb5 36.Qxb5 h4 37.Bh2 loses to 37...h3+ 38.Kh1 Nxh2, etc. **35...h4 36.Bh2 bxa4 37.Qxa4 Kh6** Black is in no hurry, feeling that she has White where she wants him. **38.Qa3 Ref7 39.Qb2 Re7 40.c6 a5 41.Rb3 Kg7 42.Rb5** A mistake but, even after looking at the position with a computer for a long while, it is barely possible to say why. 42.Rxf3 Bxf3+ 43.Kg1!? is one computer suggestion but it also looks risky in the long term with the white king so vulnerable to a mating attack. **42...h3+ 43.Kh1**



Now Black goes all in. **43...Nxh2! 44.Rxe5 Bf3+ 45.Kg1** 45.Kxh2 allows mate after 45...Bf4+ 46.Kxh3 Rxe5, etc. **45...Nxf1!!**



A position to savour. Black has nerves of steel, simply allowing White what looks like a devastating double check, winning a rook and setting up a queen check on g7. But Hou Yifan has calculated it all through to a remarkable conclusion in which Black's depleted forces triumph over White's more imposing but strangely impotent heavy pieces. **46.Rxe7+ Kh6** Black had taken seven minutes over her 44th move but her subsequent series of moves came after only a few seconds each, suggesting that she had calculated all the way through to the win. **47.Qg7+ Kh5 48.Qh7+ Kg4 49.Re8** 49.Rxc7 h2+ 50.Kxf1 h1Q+ 51.Qxh1 Bxh1 is simple enough. And after 49.Kxf1 the killer move is 49...Rb8! when White can do nothing about the threat to his back rank. **49...Rxe8 50.Qd7+ Kh4 51.Kxf1** 51.Qh7+ Bh5 52.Kxf1 Rb8 is hopeless. **51...Rd8 52.Qh7+ Kg4 0-1**

We are coming to the sharp end of the tournament but there is everything still to play for. It looks as if the two players who tied for first place in 2016, Nakamura and Vachier-Lagrave, will be in at the death again in 2017, but there are plenty of other players still in with a chance.

Tradewise Gibraltar Masters, Leader board: 1st equal, Vachier-Lagrave (France), Nakamura (USA), Yu Yangyi (China), Anton Guijarro (Spain) 6/7; 5th equal, Adams (England), Short (England), Gelfand (Israel), Cheparinov (Bulgaria), Sutovsky (Israel), Topalov (Bulgaria), Akobian (USA), Matlakov (Russia), Fridman (Germany),

Antoaneta Stefanova (Bulgaria), Romain Edouard (France) 5½. *Women's leading scores:* Antoaneta Stefanova (Bulgaria) 5½, Ju Wenjun (China), Hou Yifan, Anna Muzychuk 5.

Photos of round 7 by John Saunders: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskTr8FDs>

Photos of round 7 by Sophie Triay: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskMYS3LJ>

Video footage and interviews from today's round are available to embed from our [YouTube Channel](#).

Report Ends

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