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Chess

CARLSEN CUTS IT CLOSE

Magnus Carlsen champion once more following tie-break win

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John Henderson takes a look back at the original Mr. & Mrs. Chess



Steve Barrett reports back from the 3rd Millionaire Open

Chess

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Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein



@TelegraphChess

So Magnus did it, and convincingly in the end as he dominated the rapid chess tie-break and retained the world title in what proved to be an exciting climax to his title defence against Sergey Karjakin in New York.

According to reports in the Norwegian media, the champion was in despair after missed chances in games three and four, lackadaisical play in games five and seven, and then defeat in game eight brought him to the brink.

At 3½-4½ down with four to play, Carlsen was indeed on the edge having lost with White. He stormed out of the press conference following that defeat and could be fined up to 10% of the winner's prize of €600,000.

Afterwards, as Magnus had his tantrum, Karjakin remained calm and focused. On the topic of colours he remarked: "I repeat, it is much better to play well than to play White. There are still four games and basically anything can happen. I don't want to speak about who is favourite – I am sure it will be a big fight."

In the following game Carlsen found himself in the invidious position of having to win with Black and very nearly lost. Nearly every commentator has spoken about Karjakin's so-called safety first strategy, but that's an over simplification. Karjakin came to fight; not to take any unnecessary risks and to play for a win when the opportunity arose.

It must have been tempting to try and shut down game nine with the white pieces, but Karjakin did no such thing and Carlsen was under serious pressure when it became apparent that his opening preparation, deep though it was, had not extended to watching Peter Svidler's DVD, produced for Chess24, on the Arkhangelsk variation. Svidler was commentating live on Chess24 with the ever-entertaining Jan Gustafsson and they had a lot of fun with that.

S.Karjakin-M.Carlsen

World Championship (Game 9),
New York 2016

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♗f6 5 0-0 b5 6 ♙b3 ♙c5 7 a4 ♖b8

I'd completely forgotten that Kramnik had switched from the Berlin Defence that confounded Kasparov in their title match in 2000. Game 11 of that match saw 7...♙b7 8 d3 0-0 9 ♗c3 ♗a5 10 axb5 ♗xb3 11 cxb3 axb5 12 ♖xa8 ♙xa8 13 ♗xe5 d5 14 ♙g5 dxe4 15 dxe4 ♖xd1 16 ♖xd1 b4 17 ♙xf6 bxc3 18 bxc3 gxf6 19 ♗d7 ♙d6, reaching a tenable endgame. **8 c3 d6 9 d4 ♙b6 10 axb5 axb5 11 ♗a3 0-0 12 ♗xb5 ♙g4 13 ♙c2**



It was close run, but Magnus Carlsen was to fight back from defeat in Game 8 to retain his crown.

13 d5 ♗e7 14 ♙c2 ♖d7 15 c4 ♗g6 16 h3 ♙xh3! was Karjakin-Svidler, Russian Ch., Chita 2015. White won, but Black was doing fine.

13...exd4 14 ♗bxd4 ♗xd4 15 cxd4 ♙xf3 16 gxf3 ♗h5 17 ♗h1 ♖f6 18 ♙e3



The theory really starts now. Carlsen was playing quickly thus far. Black has some compensation as his pieces are active and White's structure is shattered, but it is White who is pressing

18...c5 19 e5 ♖e6 20 exd6 c4

An endgame is the last thing Black wants: 20...♖xd6? 21 dxc5 ♙xc5 22 ♖xd6 (maybe even 22 ♙xh7+!?) 22...♙xd6 23 ♖ab1.

21 b3 cxb3 22 ♙xb3 ♖xd6 23 ♖a6!

As proposed by Peter Svidler in his

Chess24 video and the first 'real move' after Black's over-the-board novelty of 18...c5. Carlsen now thought for half an hour.

23...♖fd8

23...♖d7 24 ♖g1 ♖fd8 25 ♖g5 g6 26 ♖d5 keeps control and here if 25...♗f6 then 26 ♙f4 ♖b7 27 ♙e5 wins, as 27...♗h8 allows 28 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 29 ♖g1+!

24 ♖g1 ♖d7 25 ♖g4 ♗f6 26 ♖h4 ♖b5

I also enjoyed analysing the intriguing line 26...♖b7 27 ♖a1 ♖d6 28 ♙c4 ♖bd8 29 ♖b1 g6 (29...♖a7 has no real threat: 30 ♖d3 ♙xd4 31 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 32 ♙xd4 ♖xd4 33 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 34 ♖b8+) 30 ♙g2 ♖d7 31 ♖b4 ♙c5 32 ♖b3 ♙xd4 33 ♙xd4 ♖xd4 34 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 35 ♖d3 ♖xd3 36 ♙xd3 ♗h5 37 ♙f1 ♗f4 38 ♖c1 ♗xd3.



Karjakin frustrated Carlsen a couple of times in New York by finding fortresses and here the champ could have returned the compliment.

27 ♖a1 g6 28 ♖b1 ♖d7 29 ♖d3 ♜d5

If White captures the knight he will find the resulting positions very hard to win.

30 ♜g1 ♜c7 31 ♜g5!



31...♜e8

There was a brief frisson in the tournament hall as people became aware of 31...♜b4? 32 ♖xg6+!! hxg6 33 ♜f6 and mates.

32 ♖c4 ♖b5 33 ♖c2

After 33 ♜a4 ♖f5 34 ♖f1! ♖b1! 35 ♖xb1 ♖xf3+ 36 ♜g2 ♜c3 37 ♖f1 ♜xa4 matters are not so clear: for instance, 38 ♜d2 ♖f6 39 ♜g5 (39 ♜h3 ♖xd4 holds) 39...♖f3 when the knight returns to the fray and White cannot coordinate and save the d4-pawn.

33...♜a8?

33...♖b4 34 ♖a2 ♖xd4!! 35 ♖xd4? ♖h3 wins for Black. A remarkable line. Both 36...♖xh2 mate and 36...♖xf3+ 37 ♜g2 ♖e1+ are threatened. Instead, 34 ♜e3 ♖eb8 forces the piece exchange Black seeks and he is safely ensconced after 35 ♜xd5 ♖xd5.

34 ♜c4

34 ♜a4 ♖xa4! 35 ♖xa4 ♖f5 36 ♖xb5 ♖xf3+ 37 ♜g2 ♖d1 would have forced a draw, or if 36 ♖d1 ♜c3!.

34...♜ba5 35 ♜d2 ♖a4

Carlsen was in time trouble, whereas Karjakin had no such worries.

36 ♖d3 ♖a1 37 ♖xa1 ♖xa1+ 38 ♜g2 ♜e7



Quite possibly another decisive moment in the match.

39 ♜xf7+?



On December 3rd, at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, GM Timur Gareyev broke the world record in blindfold simultaneous play. Without seeing the board, and slightly more strangely while riding a static bicycle, Gareyev played against 48 opponents and finished with a score of 35 wins, 7 draws, and 6 losses. A full report on this extraordinary feat will appear in our next issue.

39 ♖b3 ♜f5 40 ♜xf7+! was close to winning: 40...♖xf7 41 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 42 ♖xh7+ ♜e6 43 ♖xc7 ♜h4+ (43...♜xd4 44 ♜g7! ♜f5 45 ♜c3 wins) 44 ♜g3 ♜f5+ 45 ♜g4 ♜g1+ 46 ♜f4 ♜xd4 would be mighty unpleasant to defend, although afterwards Carlsen expressed confidence in his ability to hold. Instead, 40...♜g7 41 ♖h3 ♖e7 42 ♜g8! looks even worse for Black, as shown by 42...♜h4+ 43 ♖xh4 ♖xh4 44 ♖f7+ ♜h8 45 ♖xc7 ♜xg8 46 ♖b8+ ♜f7 47 ♖b3+ ♜f8 48 d5 and wins.

39...♜xf7 40 ♖c4+ ♜g7 41 d5 ♜f5

Black can try to hold on to the material, but his king is very weak. That said, 41...g5! 42 ♜c3+ ♜g6 43 ♖e4 ♜xd5 44 ♜xa1 ♜f4+ 45 ♖xf4 ♜xf4 should hold.

42 ♜c3+ ♜f8 43 ♜xa1 ♜xh4+ 44 ♖xh4 ♖xd5 45 ♖f6+

Black draws too after 45 ♖xh7 ♖g5+ 46 ♜f1 ♖c1+ 47 ♜g2 (and not 47 ♜e2? ♖c4+ 48 ♜d2 ♜a5+) 47...♖g5+.

45...♖f7 46 ♖d4

46 ♖h8+!? was worth consideration, and if 46...♖g8 47 ♖d4 ♖f7 48 ♜c3 or 46...♜e7 47 ♜e5 ♜xe5 48 ♖xe5+ ♜f8 49 ♖h8+ ♜e7 50 ♜g3.

46...♜e8 47 ♖e4+ ♖e7



48 ♖d5

48 ♜f6 ♖xe4 49 fxe4 ♜f7 50 ♜d4 ♜e6 looks superficially attractive, but White cannot make progress as after ...h5 even the plan of ♜g2-g3-g4 and f4-f5 is ruled out.

48...♜d8 49 ♜f1 ♖f7 50 ♖e4+ ♖e7 51 ♜e5 ♖e6 52 ♜g2 ♜e7 53 ♖a8+ ♜f7 54 ♖h8 h5 55 ♖g7+ ♜e8 56 ♜f4 ♖f7 57 ♖h8+ ♖f8 58 ♖d4 ♖f5 59 ♖c4 ♜d7 60 ♜d2 ♖e6 61 ♖a4+ ♖c6 62 ♖a7+ ♖c7 63 ♖a2 ♖d6 64 ♜e3 ♖e6 65 ♖a7+ ♜e8 66 ♜c5 ♜d8 67 h3 ♖d5 68 ♜e3 ♜e7 69 ♖b8+ ♜f7 70 ♖h8 ♖e6 71 ♜f4 ♖f6 72 ♖b8 ♖e6 73 ♖b7 ♜g8 74 ♖b5



74...♜f6 1/2-1/2

Black only has one weakness.

Game 10, where Magnus was White, was obviously his best chance. He didn't want to have to be obliged to win the twelfth and final game, Kasparov vs Karpov, Game 24, Seville 1987 notwithstanding.

It turned out to be a comedy of errors in the early middlegame as both players overlooked two chances early on for Karjakin to force a draw. Here is the denouement.



Magnus Carlsen survived the toughest test of his career to retain the world chess championship.

Carlsen had been pressing and gradually increased his advantage in space.

M. Carlsen-S. Karjakin

World Championship (Game 10),
New York 2016



55 ♖dd3!

Magnus has already been pressing for some time while keeping all his options open. Black's problems stem from the absence of any pawn break, whereas White can play for b4-b5 or g3-g4 and, crucially, the weakness of e6 and g6. The key point is that Black must be able to answer b4-b5 with ...cxb5 and ...♖c8, when he attacks the knight on c5 and does not give White a chance to play ♖b6 undermining e6. Magnus's last move prevented 55...♗e3.

55...♗h8 56 ♖b1 ♖hh7?

The decisive error. If 56...♗h6 57 g4 g5!, but 56...♗h6 57 ♖db3! ♖c8 58 g4 keeps up the pressure and opens a second front.

56...♖g8 was necessary to continue if

necessary 57 b5 cxb5 58 ♖xb5 ♖c8 59 g4 ♗h6 60 ♖db3 ♖cc7. Magnus would have continued manoeuvring I guess and tried to get his king to f4. He could then consider a b5 break followed by a5-a6 if required. Instead, Karjakin blundered and allowed e6 to be undermined.

57 b5 cxb5 58 ♖xb5 d4 59 ♖b6 ♖c7 60 ♗xe6 ♖c3 61 ♗f4 ♖hc7 62 ♗d5

Alternatively, 62 ♖xg6 ♖xd3 63 ♗xd3 ♖c3 64 ♖f6! ♗e3 65 ♗f4 d3 66 ♖d6 ♖c1 67 g4.

62...♖xd3 63 ♗xc7 ♗b8

Potential back rank threats gain a tempo to take on g6.

64 ♗b5 ♗c8 65 ♖xg6 ♖xf3 66 ♗g2 ♖b3 67 ♗d6+ ♗xd6 68 ♖xd6



68...♖e3

68...d3 69 ♗f3 d2+ 70 ♗f4 is hopeless too. **69 e6 ♗c7 70 ♖xd4 ♖xe6 71 ♖d5 ♖h6**

There is no way to defend h5 and Black is forced to go passive. Magnus now begins a decisive short king march.

72 ♗f3 ♗b8 73 ♗f4 ♗a7 74 ♗g5 ♖h8 75 ♗f6 1-0

Karjakin's stock certainly rose during the match. He was polite and sportsmanlike throughout, and made a wonderful gesture at the closing press conference with his opening remark which was: "First of all I want to wish Magnus happy birthday!". Magnus turned 26 on the day of triumph, the same age as Karjakin.

As former American, and now Norwegian GM and commentator, Jon Tisdall stated on his excellent blog: "That those words were the first uttered by the defeated challenger at the closing press conference says a lot about this match. I cannot recall a more sporting loser. The players managed to treat each other with the utmost respect throughout, and appeared to end as they began, friends and rivals. My guess is that Magnus Carlsen also left with higher regard for his opponent's abilities."

Overall, I'm pleased Magnus won. His ability to grab media attention and present a very positive side to chess by virtue of his good looks, sense of humour and increasingly media savvy presentation is helpful for the development of the game. Karjakin came across very well in New York, but he has some unhelpful baggage as a Putin supporter whose comments about gay marriage on Twitter would cause him difficulties if he lived in the west.

I took some positives out of the match. There was some decent publicity with plenty of articles in the UK mainstream media including *The Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *The Times* and on the Independent.co.uk. There was even some belated coverage on the BBC. The chess community in New York loved having the match there, attendance was good and match organisers Agon lived up to their promise to get celebrities along. Had there not been the small matter of a presidential election taking place, the contest might have received even more attention.

The return of some Cold War type overtones increased the interest. It was widely reported that Carlsen enlisted Microsoft to assist, fearing a Russian attempt to hack into his computers or Skype conversations.

As always we had the complaints, particularly after the dead twelfth game that it was too long, too short, too boring. Well I'm not ready to embrace a radical change just yet, although I see a trend towards chess becoming a three-layered sport with classical, rapid and blitz having equal standing. Maybe one day we might have a title contest with all three forms of the game included, not just in tie-breaks.

What I saw was exciting enough – both players fought hard nearly every game and we had a dramatic finale. Spectators do need to learn that a computer assessment of '0.00' may have absolutely no bearing at all on what is happening in the players' heads or on the board, yet the computer also enabled nearly everyone to get an insight of a sort into what was happening. I was pleased to hear that match organiser Ilya Merezon said that the next match will be in exactly two years' time. That's the kind of stability we aim for in the Grand Chess Tour – everyone knows well in advance who is playing, where and when.