



Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival 2018

Monday 22 January - Thursday 1 February 2018

Round 3 Report: Thursday 25 January 2018 - by John Saunders (@JohnChess)

The Magnificent Seven

After the third day's play at the Caleta Hotel seven players remain on 3/3: Hikaru Nakamura (USA), Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Poland), David Howell (England), Nils Grandelius (Sweden), Benjamin Gledura (Hungary), Mikhail Antipov (Russia), and the sole female representative amongst the leading group, Nino Batsiashvili (Georgia).

After the surprises of the first two rounds, the higher-rated players generally reasserted their superiority in round three. Levon Aronian won comfortably and is now poised half a point behind the leading group. Similarly, other elite players such as Boris Gelfand, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Le Quang Liem won their games to stay well in touch with the leaders. Nigel Short was less fortunate with the pairings, being pitted against the remarkable Indian prodigy Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa, who is fast becoming a nightmare for super-GM opponents and chess scribblers who can't remember how to spell his name. After their game Short, himself a prodigy sometime back in the Ice Age, paid generous tribute to his youthful opponent's tenacity and maturity as a player.

Hikaru Nakamura is looking in formidable form once again. His round three opponent, Argentinian GM Federico Perez Ponsa, played the white pieces too passively against him and was soon being tied in knots. I think the most difficulty Hikaru had all afternoon was when he and I tried to pass each other in the narrow aisle between boards and we did that typical thing where both people repeatedly go to the same side. That ended with a smile and a mutual "sorry". Hikaru seems pretty relaxed and shows no sign of being burdened by any expectation on him to make it four Gibraltar victories in a row.

Jan-Krzysztof Duda from Poland is a relatively new member of the 2700 club. He met some stern resistance from Luca Moroni, with the game coming down to a rook and pawn endgame, which looked drawn – until it wasn't. Even though the pawns were on one side of the board, Duda still had enough positional advantages to reach a winning position. The endgame phase of this game is well worth playing through.

David Howell is flying the flag for the English contingent this year. He beat Nana Dzagnidze, who has twice been winner of the top women's prize here. David opened patriotically (1.c4) and gradually nursed a small edge until Nana tried to break out, unsuccessfully. Once David had established his rook on d8 he always looked like winning.



Swedish GM Nils Grandelius reached 3/3 with a nice finish to a tactical skirmish against Nitzan Steinberg of Israel. Here's the denouement.

Tradewise Gibraltar Masters, Round 3, 25.01.2018

N.Grandelius (2647) - N.Steinberg (2512)

The question: does White have time to take on d4, given that Black threatens mate on h2 and the rook on h2?

33.Qxd4+! Nils decides he can. **33...Be5** Now his queen's *en prise* too. But where there's a check, there's still hope. **34.h6+ Kh7** 34...Kf8 is not out of the question, particularly as a discovered check is answered forcibly by Qxf1+, but it turns out that, after 35.Qg1! Be4+ 36.Bxe4 Qxe4+ 37.Qg2 Qxg2+ 38.Kxg2 Kg8 39.h7+ Kxh7 40.Re1, the game is up for Black. **35.Ng5+ Kxh6** After 35...Kh8 White has 36.Qf2! when 36...Qxf2 37.Rxf2 and an easy win. **36.Qh4+ Qh5 37.Nf7+! 1-0** 37...Kg7 38.Qxh5 gxh5 39.Re1 Kf6 40.Rxe5 Rxe5 41.Nxe5 Kxe5 42.Bxb7 is a straightforward technical win.

Having browsed through most of the other heavyweight games played in round three of the Masters, I've decided not to annotate one of them but turn instead to this entertaining game played earlier the same day in the Challengers. My thanks to David Sedgwick for drawing my attention to it. I was tempted to label it a morality tale but then it occurred to me that it might encourage people to make a pun on the opening involved and refer to it as a Morrality tale. But of course [I would never resort to this low form of humour myself](#), you understand.

Tradewise Gibraltar Challengers A, Round 4, 25.01.2018

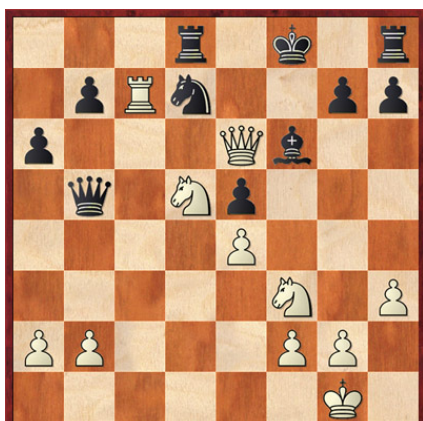
T.Lochte (2169) - N.Maisuradze (2234)

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 The Morra Gambit, which you won't see in many grandmaster games. Database statistics show it scores dimly for White (40% or lower) but that doesn't tell the whole story and, used judiciously, it can pack a punch. **3...dxc3 4.Nxc3 Nc6 5.Nf3 d6 6.Bc4 a6 7.0-0 Nf6 8.h3** Of course, there are exceptions. The great Bobby Fischer played the Morra against Viktor Korchnoi at Buenos Aires in 1960. The game continued 8.Bg5 e6 9.Qe2 Be7 10.Rfd1 Qc7 11.Rac1 0-0 12.Bb3 h6 13.Bf4 e5 14.Be3 and the game ended in a draw. But bear in mind that this was played during the one really bad tournament that Fischer played in the whole of his career, where he scored 8½/19 to finish in 13th place. **8...e6 9.Qe2 Be7 10.Rd1 Qc7 11.Bf4 Ne5 12.Bxe5** In previous outings with the Morra, White has preferred 12.Bb3 here, so perhaps he wanted to wrong-foot his opponent, who would have checked out his repertoire on a database. **12...dxe5 13.Rac1 Bd7?** (*diagram*)



Not a losing mistake but, after White's bold reply, Black's defensive task suddenly becomes extremely difficult. Instead Black should have taken precautions and preferred a prophylactic move. Several were available but the move which scores best here is 13...Qb8 after which it is not obvious what White's plan is. **14.Bxe6!** Engines also advocate this combative reply, though databases show that the two games where it was used scored only ½/2 for White. But we can disregard these two anomalous results, in accordance with the well-known saying: "there are lies, damned lies, and chess database statistics". **14...fxe6 15.Nd5 Qa5?** One reason the Morra sometimes works so well is that it puts a premium on accurate defensive calculation by Black, which is not always forthcoming at lower levels of the

game. **15...Nxd5!**, giving up the queen for a rook and two minor pieces, is the correct defence: **16.Rxc7 Nxc7 17.Nxe5 0-0-0** was played in Kracik-Kasik, Klatovy 2004, and ended in a draw. **16.Nc7+ Kf7 17.Qc4!** In a game between two modestly-rated players, Peierl-Kucera, Heviz 2011, White went horribly wrong with the immediate **17.Rxd7? Nxd7 18.Ng5+? Bxg5 19.Qh5+ g6 20.Qxg5 Rac8**, and Black won. The text move, preparing to capture on d7, is deadly. **17...Rad8 18.Rxd7** Engines find a crushing win after **18.Nxe6!** but the text will do nicely. **18...Nxd7 19.Qxe6+** Once again the engines hold out for **19.Nxe6!** **19...Kf8 20.Nd5 Bf6 21.Rc7 Qb5 21...Qxa2!?** might have been better: **22.Rxd7?! Rxd7 23.Qxd7 Qb1+ 24.Kh2 Qxe4** and Black is still in the game, but White has better moves than the immediate capture on d7. (*diagram*)



22.Nxe5! The key move to break up Black's defences. **22...Nxe5 23.Nxf6** Now it is impossible to defend the black king against the mating threats so Black has to throw all his resources into securing a perpetual check. He comes close to success but the white king flees right across the board to safety. **23...Rd1+ 24.Kh2 Nf3+ 25.gxf3 Rh1+** From here to the end of the game White moves only his king, with most of them being 'only moves'. **26.Kg2!** **26.Kxh1? Qf1+ 27.Kh2 Qxf2+** is perpetual check. **26...Qf1+ 27.Kg3 Qg1+ 27...Qxh3+ 28.Qxh3 Rxh3+ 29.Kxh3 gxf6 30.Rxb7** and White can force a king and pawn endgame which is trivially won for White. **28.Kf4 28.Kh4?? Qxf2+**

wins for Black. **28...Qh2+ 29.Ke3 Re1+** Maddeningly for Black, 29...Qxc7 allows 30.Qe8 mate. **30.Kd3! Rd1+ 31.Ke2! Rd2+** The only move to prolong the game. **32.Kxd2 Qxf2+ 33.Kc3 Qe3+ 34.Kb4 a5+ 35.Kxa5 b6+** 35...Qa7+ 36.Kb5 Qa6+ 37.Qxa6 bxa6+ 38.Kxa6 is an easy win. **36.Ka6 1-0**

A selection of photos of round three can be downloaded from the [John Saunders's Flickr collection](#) or [Sophie Triay's Flickr collection](#), or from Patricia Claros's [Facebook page](#).

Video footage and interviews from today's round are available to view and/or embed from the Tradewise Gibraltar [YouTube Channel](#).

Report Ends

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