



TRADEWISE GIBRALTAR CHESS FESTIVAL

Monday 22 January - Thursday 1 February 2018

Round 5 Report: Saturday 27 January 2018 - by John Saunders (@JohnChess)

Nakamura Stands Alone

Hikaru Nakamura remains out on his own with 5/5 after the Saturday play in the Tradewise Gibraltar Masters. The number of his immediate pursuers has now been whittled down to two after David Howell beat Rasmus Svane and Mikhail Antipov beat Emil Sutovsky with Black. So the leading scores are Nakamura 5, Howell, Antipov 4½, with 20 players on 4, including MVL, Rapport, Ivanchuk, Navara, Vitiugov, Wang Hao amongst the 2700+ rated players, and Nino Batsiashvili and Ju Wenjun also on 4, leading the race for the top women's prize.

Nakamura played positively for a result with the black pieces against Jan-Krzysztof Duda, choosing the combative Dragon Variation. A long slab of theory ensued, and the Polish GM had probably done enough for a draw when he played carelessly and allowed the American some forceful queenside play. It was invitation enough for the American to go on the offensive and bamboozle his opponent.

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J-K.Duda (2724) - H.Nakamura

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3 0-0 8.Qd2 Nc6 9.0-0-0 d5 10.Qe1 e5 11.Nxc6 bxc6 12.exd5 Nxd5 13.Bc4 Be6 14.Kb1 The main line is 14.Ne4 Qc7 15.Bc5 Rfd8 16.g4, etc, but this too gets played a lot. **14...Rb8 14...Re8** was the continuation in the recent Carlsen-Jones game at Tata Steel Wijk, won by White despite blundering a piece. **15.Ne4 Qc7** Gawain Jones and others favour 15...f5 here. **16.Bc5 Rfd8 17.g4 h6 18.h4 f5 19.gxf5 gxf5 20.Ng3 Qf7 21.Bb3 Rd7 22.Ne2** Finally exiting known territory. Previous games have continued with 22.Qa5 **22...Rbd8 23.h5** Here Hikaru said after the game that he had prepared for 23.Rg1 followed by 24.Qa5, so now he was out of his prep. **23...Kh7 24.Qa5 Nf4** "I think this was objectively correct. I simplified to where it should be pretty balanced and even, I just couldn't come up with anything better despite the huge advantage on the clock." (Nakamura) **25.Rxd7 Rxd7 26.Nxf4 exf4 27.Qe1 Bd5 28.Bb4** (diagram left)



"I was pretty much ready to make a draw but then he made this b4 move, he got a little bit careless, allowing c5." (Nakamura) **28...c5** "I suspect it is probably still OK for White but when you go from being even, maybe even having a small advantage to having to defend, it is very unpleasant." (Nakamura) **29.Bxd5?** Nakamura thought 29.Ba5 or 29.Bc3 were better. Curiously, engines see no reason not to play 29.Bxc5 here, when 29...Qf6 30.c3 Bxf3 31.Rg1 and the game goes on. **29...Qxd5 30.Ba3 Qxf3 31.Bxc5 Rb7** Now Nakamura felt the threats to the white queenside, plus the fact that Black had passed f-pawns was the decisive factor. **32.b3 Qd5 33.Ba3?! 33.Bf2 Re7!?** 34.Qxe7 Qxh1+ 35.Be1 Qe4 36.Qh4 f3 looks terribly difficult

for White. But allowing Black to line up on the long diagonal is of course worse. **33...Qd4 34.c3 Qd3+ 35.Kb2 f3 36.Bc5** (diagram right)

36...f2! A beautiful double deflection combination by Nakamura. First he draws the bishop away from c5, where it is defending the e7 square...



37.Bxf2 Re7! ... and then he deflects the queen away from the defence of c3. **38.Qxe7 Qxc3+ 39.Ka3 Qa5** mate

David Howell said in his post-match interview that he exchanged pawns on d5 against the French Defence for the first time in his life against Rasmus Svane. It seemed predictably low-key for quite a while but the 20-year-old German grandmaster became a little passive and then failed to find the right defence on move 33. Sutovsky-Antipov was also a French Defence. Eventually the Israeli blundered (on move 39) and that cost him the game.

There was some particularly interesting chess in this round. I was particularly entertained by Pichot-Cheparinov where we saw a good old-fashioned Poisoned Pawn variation of the Najdorf. Bobby Fischer would have been pleased. White deserved a share of the credit for going for the win but he was somewhat unfortunate that his attack had a hidden flaw which probably only an elite player could have spotted. Cheparinov has won the brilliancy prize in Gibraltar before and he might be in the running again with this fine finish.

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A.Pichot (2552) - I.Cheparinov (2699)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 h6 8.Bh4 Qb6 9.Qd2 Qxb2 Good to see Fischer's favourite Poisoned Pawn variation is still being played well into the 21st century. Other adherents of this bold line are MVL and Oparin, both playing in Gibraltar. **10.Rb1 Qa3 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5 g5 13.exf6 gxh4 14.Be2 Qa5 15.0-0 h3** A sideline which has been played a fair few times. The main line is 15...Nd7 16.Kh1 Qg5 17.Rf4 e5 18.Nd5 exd4 19.Qxd4 Kd8 which looks mind-bendingly complex for those of us not versed in this highly complex system. **16.Bf3 Nd7 17.Kh1** Only played once before. 17.Nd5 is the respectable move here, when, after 17...Qc5 18.Rfe1, all of the games on the database have ended in a draw. whereas 17.Bxb7? Bxb7



18.Rxb7 Rg8 has ended in a loss for White on all four occasions that it has been played. **17...Ne5 17...Qg5 18.Qe2 Qe5 19.Qc4 Qc5 20.Qd3 Ne5** was played in Lampert-Scholz, Bundesliga 2014, and Black won. **18.Rfe1** White has a very aggressive idea in mind here, as we shall see, but it doesn't quite work. Maybe occupying the d-file would have worked out better. **18.Rfd1 18...Nxf3 19.gxf3 Rg8 (diagram)**

20.Nxe6!? A bold plan to expose the white king. I've little doubt that it would have worked against the vast majority of players but Black is only one rating point shy of 2700 and a tactical virtuoso. **20...fxe6 21.Rxb7!?** A tremendous shot but Black has an even bigger one coming, **21...Rg1+!!** A deflection to end all deflections. Definitely not 21...Bxb7?? **22.Rxe6+ Kf7 23.Qd7+ Kg6 24.f7+ and White wins. 22.Kxg1** If 22.Rxg1 simply 22...Bxb7 and White has nothing. If 23.f7+ Ke7 and Black will win comfortably. **22...Qc5+!!** The point of this very necessary follow-up is seen in the line 22...Bxb7? **23.Rxe6+ Kf7 24.Qd7+ Kg8 25.f7+** when White can answer a king move to a dark square with **26.Qd4+** and secure a perpetual check. The black queen on c5 will deprive him of this possibility. **23.Kh1 Bxb7 24.Rxe6+ Kf7 25.Qd7+ Kg8** The other point of 21...Rg1+ was to secure this safe bolt-hole for Black's king. **25...Kg6? 26.Qxb7** leads to a draw as the White can come to e4 and initiate a perpetual check. **26.f7+ 26.Qxb7 Qf2** and White has nothing. **26...Kg7 27.Qd3 Qg5 28.Qd4+ Kxf7 0-1**

Edouard-Gagare featured another morality tale. White played a dodgy move to which the reply indicated that White should have unmade the previous move and thus admitted its inadequacy. He failed to do so and was duly punished.

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R.Edouard (2613) - S.Gagare (2494)



This position is roughly equal. **19.Qb4? Rb5** The reason the previous move was adorned with a query mark was because, after Black's reply, the only sensible reply is for the queen to return from whence it came. Of course, nobody ever likes doing this as it is an open admission that their last move was sub-optimal. Nevertheless, had White moved his queen back to d4, he might have suffered

some loss of face (and time) but he might well have averted the loss of the game. Instead he tried to justify his queen excursion to b4 by doing something different and the result is instant disaster. **20.Qc3?? Nb3!** Game over. **21.Qc7** Now if the c1 rook moves away from c1, 21...Rc5 skewers the c2 rook. And if 21.Nxb3 axb3 22.Rd2, this time 22...Rc5 skewers the c1 rook. **21...Qxc7 22.Rxc7 Nxc1 0-1** After the recapture on c1, Black takes the b2-pawn and White is the exchange and a pawn adrift.

Battle of the Sexes

The middle Saturday at the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival is the day when the tournament's showpiece event is held, the legendary Battle of the Sexes, when two teams of six players line up to play three raucous games of blitz on a giant-sized board in the hotel's restaurant area. The match has the trappings and razzmatazz of a boxing contest, and provides an opportunity for the super-GMs and top women players to let their hair down and show a light-hearted and silly side to their personalities. That said, you only have to look at the faces of the players in the numerous photos taken of the event to see that some of them at least take it deadly seriously. Chess players are nothing if not competitive. Depressingly, the men won the match 2-1. Your reporter only really enjoys it when the women win, when their squeals of genuine delight and the silent faces of the vanquished males show just how seriously the match is taken. Sadly, not this time. I only hope that Antoaneta Stefanova's team give Nigel Short's squad the sound thrashing they so richly deserve in 2019. Credit to Stuart Conquest and Tania Sachdev for providing the cabaret in the shape of some singing and dancing and underlining their reputation as the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers of chess.

Incidentally, I was pleased to hear Levon Aronian's comments on this match in his later interview. He noted that the women played the match under the handicap of wearing high-heeled shoes, and that perhaps by way of compensation the men should do something different and, say, wear kilts next year. Fine creative thinking from the most imaginative chess player of the modern era. It did strike me that the women would certainly win the battle of the sexes every year were sartorial elegance to be taken into consideration and translated into points. Whereas the women always arrive dressed in the height of elegance, some of the men really need to try harder. Perhaps the organisers could hire ever-popular organiser Zurab Azmaiparashvili next year to give the men's team a severe ticking-off if they don't turn up in their best togs. Perhaps the chaps could take a leaf out of director Stuart Conquest's book, resplendent in a white tuxedo, or arbiter Matthew Carr, nattily turned out in a specially-bought bow tie and deservedly drooled over by a bevy of female assistant arbiters. This is the way forward for chess. I want to see the other guys worry less about their opening repertoire and do some work on their wardrobe.

A selection of photos from round five can be downloaded from the Flickr collections of [John Saunders](#) or [Sophie Triay](#).

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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