



**PRESS RELEASE**  
For immediate release

## **LONDON CLASSIC DAY 1: CARUANA NARROWLY MISSES #1 SPOT**

- World Championship challenger Fabiano Caruana is held to a draw by Hikaru Nakamura in the first semi-final game of the London Chess Classic, the final leg of the Grand Chess Tour, despite coming close to a decisive kingside attack on multiple occasions.
- The result leaves Caruana still just short of World Champion Magnus Carlsen's No. 1 spot on the live ratings.
- Levon Aronian presses Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in an endgame but is also held to a draw in 74 moves.
- In the accompanying British Knockout Semi-Finals, Luke McShane forces a perpetual after mounting a strong counter-attack on Mickey Adams' king.

**LONDON (December 11, 2018)** – The big question on everyone's lips at the start of play at the London Chess Classic Semi-Finals was whether Fabiano Caruana could win to overtake Magnus Carlsen – just 3 points ahead of him in the live ratings – to grab the coveted World No. 1 spot that the Norwegian has held for seven years.

Caruana came very close to securing the win, playing aggressively against Hikaru Nakamura's Queen's Gambit Declined, and sacrificing the front of two g-pawns to mount a kingside attack against Nakamura's king. Yet perhaps in an echo of Caruana's World Championship match last month with Carlsen, the win proved elusive as even computer analysis showed no clear way through, despite giving Caruana a sizeable advantage.

The other game in the Semi-Finals, with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave playing a Ruy Lopez against double king-pawn specialist Levon Aronian, was eventually drawn despite the Armenian having a slight advantage in the endgame.

Both games in the British Knockout Championship, which were played in the same auditorium at Google Deep Mind's London offices, were also drawn. While David Howell versus Gawain Jones was a fairly sedate affair, Luke McShane's game with Mickey Adams was an end-to-end running battle, with first Adams and then McShane

taking the initiative on the kingside. An exchange sacrifice by McShane led to a forced draw, leaving all still to play for in Game 2 tomorrow.

Both the London Classic and British Knockout follow the same Grand Chess Tour knockout format. After the second Classical game on Wednesday, play switches on Thursday to two rapid and four blitz games. If the players are still level, rapid playoff matches and if required an Armageddon blitz game will decide who goes through to the finals.



*DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis plays the first move in Fabiano Caruana's game with Hikaru Nakamura on Tuesday at the London Chess Classic.*

For **media enquiries** related to the London Chess Classic and the British Knockout Championship, please contact: Tim Wall – [press@londonchessclassic.com](mailto:press@londonchessclassic.com)

*The London Chess Classic is the final leg of the 2018 Grand Chess Tour. It is the flagship event of [Chess in Schools and Communities](#) and includes a range of amateur and age-grade competitions for 1,000s of children from the charity initiative nationwide.*