



# GIBRALTAR

## INTERNATIONAL CHESS FESTIVAL

*Monday 21 January - Thursday 31 January 2019*

### 2019 Gibraltar Masters: Round 5 – 26 January

#### The Battle of the Sexes

**John Saunders reports:** there are now two leaders of the 2019 Gibraltar Masters after round five, the halfway point of the ten-round tournament, played on 26 January at the Caleta Hotel. David Navara (Czech Republic) was held to a draw by Wesley So and caught by Vladislav Artemiev of Russia, who beat Rinat Jumabayev of Kazakhstan, so both are now on 4½/5. Eighteen players are in the chasing pack on 4 points: Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Romain Edouard (both France), Nigel Short, Michael Adams (both of England), Levon Aronian (Armenia), Wesley So (USA), Nils Grandelius (Sweden), Arkadij Naiditsch (Azerbaijan), Gabor Papp (Hungary), Nikita Vitiugov, Mikhail Antipov (both Russia), Hikaru Nakamura (USA), Baskaran Adhiban (India), Eduardo Iturrizaga (Venezuela), Le Quang (Liem), Ivan Saric (Croatia), Lance Henderson de la Fuente (Spain) and finally Sarasadat Khademalsharieh (Iran), who remains the lowest rated of the leading group and who still leads the hunt for the lucrative women's first prize.

Four of the top five pairings ended in draws but were well contested. The new joint leader was the beneficiary of a catastrophic tactical error by his opponent GM Rinat Jumabayev of Kazakhstan, whose combination to designed to regain a piece simply lost his queen (or at least a lot of material).

#### Round 5: Rinat Jumabayev (2604) - Vladislav Artemiev (2709)



Black is a pawn down but he has adequate compensation for it in terms of pressure on White's queenside.

**25.Bf4 g5!** The best move, more or less ensuring that he regains his pawn. It also forces White to find a couple of good moves. He finds the first, but not the second. **26.Rc1 Qb2 27.Be3??** A massive blunder. Instead **27.Re1 gxf4 28.Rxe4 Rxe4 29.Qxe4 fxe3 30.Kxg3 Qxb3+** leading to an equal position. **27...gxh4 28.Qxe4 Rxe4 0-1** The enormity of his error must have struck White at this moment because he resigned. After **29.Rc8+ Bf8 30.Bh6** Black has the simple defence **30...Qxa3** and it's all over.



*A blunder cost Rinat Jumabayev (left) a full point against Vladislav Artemiev*

Navara-So was an evenly contested encounter starting with a Ruy Lopez which petered out to a level rook and pawn endgame. Grandelius-Naiditsch was another Ruy Lopez but this one came down to a level bishop endgame. Adams-Papp was a Petroff but it too failed to catch fire. Sarasadat Khademalsharieh's game against Baskar Adhiban was more eventful, with the Iranian woman player seemingly under some pressure but she managed to right her ship and hold the game. She retains her status as the leader in the race to take the women's top prize, with her main rival Ju Wenjun going down to defeat against the tournament's highest rated player, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. The Frenchman thrust his g-pawn down the board on move 7 in bold D'Artagnan style in some sort of English opening, presumably to get the women's world champion out of her comfort zone and stir things up. It worked only too well and he was soon well in charge of the position and with an extra pawn.

Last year's winner Levon Aronian had a long, hard fight to overcome the rugged resistance of Argentinian GM Fernando Peralta. Perhaps this long work-out will be beneficial for his game and help him run into form. Fourth seed Yu Yangyi was not so fortunate, trying to beat 21-year-old Russian GM Daniil Yuffa in a minor piece endgame for 145 moves but not succeeding. The Chinese super-GM remains on +2.

Former Gibraltar winner Nikita Vitiugov had a very quick win, dispatching 18-year-old IM Bharathakoti Harsha in just 21 moves, after the Indian player went in for a dodgy opposite sides castling line of the Pirc Defence which had commentator Simon Williams shaking his ginger locks in disbelief at his naivety. The Russian launched an attack down the kingside towards the enemy and though Black did the same on the other side and evicted the white king from his berth, White was able to find a comfortable new home for his monarch while the black king could find no safety. Having done little more than half a day's work, Vitiugov has decided to reward himself with a bye on Sunday as well, so should return fully rested for the final four rounds of the tournament.

A warning to the competitors: four-times winner Hikaru Nakamura is back in the hunt with 4/5 after defeating 19-year-old Indian GM Murali Karthikeyan. It was a tough game but the American engineered a powerful pawn block on the kingside to ensure an endgame advantage.

The middle Saturday evening was set aside for the now traditional Battle of the Sexes match in which teams of six men and women confront each other in a best of three blitz match played at ten minutes apiece. An innovation this year was that winners of a game have three minutes docked from their clock for the next game. Thus the men's team, ably managed by FIDE Vice-President Nigel Short, played the second game with seven minutes to the women's ten. The men opened 1.b4 for the second game and duly blew it, allowing a deadly skewer along a diagonal to the squeals of delight from the women's team. Manager Short then made what can euphemistically be described as a brave decision to replace David Howell with someone he referred to as "more athletic", veteran GM Raymond Keene. Perhaps he was influenced by seeing a photo in a chess magazine of Keene jogging with Korchnoi but that was 40+ years ago. The morning after the men's team manager must be fingering his contract more nervously than his England cricket equivalent as the substitute allowed a killing pin – game, set and match to the women, to general delight and cruel chants of "losers" directed at the men's side. Your correspondent's own special award must go to GM David Navara for his

gymnastic skills in effortlessly vaulting over pieces whilst moving around the giant board. Also, to Raymond Keene for not attempting the same as the resultant earthquake could have led to a rock fall.



*The victorious women's squad from the Battle of the Sexes match*

The men versus women match was followed by the equally traditional post-match dancing in the ring, footage of which may eventually be available on YouTube. We have some genuinely good dancers in our midst, notably tournament founder Brian Callaghan who wears his years lightly.

Note on the round six pairings: quite a number of leading players have opted for a bye in round six, including joint tournament leader David Navara and three players from the group half a point behind him on 4/5, namely Arkadij Naiditsch, Nikita Vitiugov and Gabor Papp. I wonder if this strategy was inspired by the result at the Chess.com Isle of Man International last year when the joint highest scorers, Radoslaw Wojtaszek and Arkadij Naiditsch, both took a bye in mid-tournament.

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*Report Ends*

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