



GIBRALTAR INTERNATIONAL CHESS FESTIVAL

Monday 21 January - Thursday 31 January 2019

2019 Gibraltar Masters: Round 6 – 27 January

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John Saunders reports: the number of players in the top score group ballooned to eight after round six of the 2019 Gibraltar Masters, played on 27 January at the Caleta Hotel. David Navara took a bye while Maxime Vachier-Lagrave held Vladislav Artemiev to a draw, which enabled six others to catch up in a particularly bloodthirsty round which saw only four draws on the top 20 boards. The six who now share top spot on 5/6 with Navara and Artemiev are last year's winner Levon Aronian, Nils Grandelius, Le Quang Liem, Ivan Saric, Baskaran Adhiban and four-times winner Hikaru Nakamura who has fought his way back from a slow start with two draws. Mariya Muzychuk is now the leading woman scorer: she is one of 20 players in the second score group of 4½.

David Navara taking a bye meant there was no clash of leaders, so Vladislav Artemiev was paired down to the tournament's highest rated player, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Artemiev played a fairly conservative opening and a draw eventually emerged from a fairly mild encounter. But blood was drawn on the next four boards. Nigel Short lost in 52 moves to Levon Aronian but, judging from his post-game tweet, he considered resigning much earlier: "Totally outplayed by @LevAronian. Wanted to resign after 25 moves (which would have been completely justified) but was embarrassed to do so. I couldn't even understand what I did wrong." Since Nigel couldn't figure out what he got wrong, I suppose the chances of me doing so must be zilch so I'll leave readers to check that one out for themselves.



Nigel Short (left) couldn't understand what he did wrong against Levon Aronian

On the next board there was another win for Black playing the Sicilian, with one of the tournament's biggest stars biting the dust. Wesley So played an aggressive and entertaining line against the Sicilian and seemed to be well placed before a miscalculation ruined his game. Hats off to Nils Grandelius for seizing his chance and following it up so well. This was a real crowd-pleasing game – just the sort of thing we enjoy seeing in Gibraltar.

Round 6: Wesley So (2765) - Nils Grandelius (2682)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2 e6 7.f4 Be7 8.Be3 0-0 9.g4 9.0-0 is the more restrained option but it seems not to score as well as the more aggressive text. 9...Nc6 10.g5 Nd7 11.Rg1 Re8 12.h4 Nxd4 13.Qxd4 b5 13...e5 was played in the game Inarkiev-Oparin in 2013, but we're now in uncharted waters. 14.a3 Rb8 15.h5 Bf8 16.0-0-0 Qa5 17.g6 fxg6 18.hxg6 h6



A classic Sicilian dilemma now for White: does he (a) continue with his kingside attack or (b) address the defensive situation on the queenside? Wesley chooses (a)... **19.Rh1** I expect proponents of plan (b) might have preferred 19.Na2 or perhaps 19.Qb4. Stockfish 10 is in favour of plan (b) but actually plan (a) is not bad either, if conducted accurately. **19...b4 20.Rh5 Nc5 21.axb4 Rxb4 22.Bc4 Qa1+ 23.Nb1?** This costs White a pawn and leads to a simplification of the position. Instead 23.Kd2! Qxb2 24.Rb1 Nb3+ 25.Bxb3 Rxd4+ 26.Bxd4 and, ironically, Wesley would have had another opportunity to demonstrate his skill with rook and minor piece versus a queen as he did so brilliantly in round two. It looks pretty good for White: 26...Qa3 27.f5 d5 28.Nxd5! when Black certainly can't take the knight: 28...exd5?? 29.Bxd5+ Kh8 30.Rxh6# **23...Nxe4! 24.Rd3** Not 24.Qxe4 Qxb2+ 25.Kd2 d5! game over. 24.b3 Qxd4 25.Rxd4 Ng3 is probably just a win for Black. **24...d5 25.Ra3 Bc5** Black has his extra pawn so plans to liquidate the material down to a won endgame. **26.Rxa1 Bxd4 27.Bxd4 Rxc4 28.c3 Rf8 29.Rh4 Ng3 30.b3 Nf5 31.bxc4 Nxh4** Black now wins a second pawn and it is already resignable. **32.cxd5 exd5 33.Ra5 Nxc6 34.Rxd5 Nxf4 35.Ra5 h5 36.Kd2 h4 0-1**



Wesley So's brave play went unrewarded but Nils Grandelius took his chance well

Chess fans were spoilt for choice in round six and another crowd-pleasing game was the clash between US star Hikaru Nakamura and Venezuelan GM Eduardo Iturrizaga. Hikaru gave up the exchange in a Queen's Indian, and whilst Eduardo chose to mop up the queenside, his kingside was met with what one might term a 'significant response'.

Round 6: Hikaru Nakamura (2749) - Eduardo Iturrizaga Bonelli (2637)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Bb7 5.Bg2 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.Re1 Qc8 8.Nc3 Ne4 9.Bf4 An unusual move but this game may lead to more people trying it as it works out extremely well. 9...Nxc3 10.bxc3 Be4 11.Bf1 Bd6

11...Bxf3 12.exf3 Nc6 13.Bd3 Na5 14.Qc2 was played in Feller-Filip, France 2015, and won by White in the same number of moves and similar fashion to this game. **12.Bc1** Curious how both players have now made two moves with each of their bishops, and that White should have relocated them to their original squares. Subsequent play seems to show that White's bishop deployments are significantly wiser than Black's as the second player soon finds it hard to develop his queenside. **12...c5?** This looks like a major positional error as after White's pawn advance it is going to be hard for the black knight to get into the game. **13.d5 exd5 14.cxd5 Re8 15.c4 Qa6 16.Nd2!**



Initiating the exchange sacrifice. Black finds he has nothing better than to go for it, though by now he must have had an inkling of how it might pan out. **16...Be5 17.Nxe4 Bxa1 18.Nd6 Rf8 19.e4 Be5 20.Bf4** Whichever way Black captures, he surrenders his one active piece on the kingside whilst the rest of his army is totally out of play. **20...Bxd6 21.Bxd6 Re8 22.e5 Qxa2** Again, there is nothing better. Black just has to play on hoping that White will slip up somewhere, but there is precious little chance of that. **23.Re4 Na6 24.Rg4 Qb2 25.Qf3 Nb4** Attempting to give back the exchange with 25...Rxe5 meets with the reply 26.Qf6 which wins a whole rook. **26.Qf6 g6 27.h4** The final member of the firing squad, Harry the h-pawn, reports for duty. **27...h5 28.Rf4 Rf8 29.g4 1-0**



Hikaru Nakamura soon overwhelmed Eduardo Iturrizaga in a Queen's Indian

On the next board Le Quang Liem ended the fine run of Sarasadat Khademalsharieh, applying some classic 'Spanish torture' in a Ruy Lopez. Adams-Edouard was a fairly orthodox QGD which ended in an 'entente cordiale' on move 31. Mikhail Antipov played too passively with White against Croatian GM Ivan Saric and was unceremoniously swept from the board in only 22 moves. This was another excellent game which is well worth a look. Adhiban-Henderson de la Fuente was soon queenless but the Indian was still able to whip up a central attack that netted a pawn that won the game.

22-year-old Spanish GM Jaime Latasa Santos is a new name to me – he's not played in Gibraltar before – but he achieved glory in round six by defeating Vassily Ivanchuk. The great Ukrainian sacrificed the exchange in a messy middlegame position, perhaps hoping to stir things up even more, but the young Spaniard proved up to the task of defusing his tricks, won a pawn and liquidated to an easy win. Well done, that young man.

Another former Gibraltar winner, Ivan Cheparinov, was also defeated, by India's Babu Lalith. Cheparinov's kingside attack netted an exchange but at too high a price in pawns. By the end Lalith had four of them as overwhelming compensation. Another top Indian player, SP Sethuraman, was not so lucky, beaten by the 2008 European Union champion, Dutch GM Jan Werle in 31 moves of a French defence. Worth playing through to see Werle's final assault on the white king.

Mariya has won the Gibraltar women's top prize before, as well as the women's world championship, and she looks in good shape to do so again after beating Hrant Melkumyan who exceeds her rating by 120 points. The game followed theory for some 23 moves with the Armenian slipping up a few moves later.

As in the previous round, some leading players are opting to take a bye in round seven, notably joint leader Levon Aronian and the front-runner for the women's first prize Mariya Muzychuk. There are no rest days so play resumes on Monday at 15.00 local time (GMT+1).

Report Ends

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