



Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein



@TelegraphChess

Amidst the terrible mayhem caused by the virus there seem to be some trends emerging, at least in countries with developed market economies. Many appear to be the acceleration of things that were happening anyway. In the UK that would include the demise of the high street and the changing nature of retail, the increase of home working and, perhaps, more emphasis on the promotion of healthy lifestyles. In chess, it's undoubtedly the acceleration of the move to online chess and also to faster time limits.

We are about to embark on a new era, one which produces many exciting possibilities to play, enjoy and popularise the game. It's been very heartening to watch online providers, particularly Chess24, Chess.com and Lichess, working together with governing bodies such as FIDE, the ECF and USCF to create new tournaments. Before we get carried away, I want to sound a word of warning. What we are seeing, particularly with regards to new club and Open competitions is very welcome, but don't be kidded – the explosion of events does not mean that the cheating issue has been resolved. At the elite level, cheating is not an issue and there are the resources available to give everyone confidence.

Last month I mentioned that local clubs should plan for a world where they meet regularly online, as well as at terrestrial venues. Some players will want to continue to play online, some over the board, and some will want to do both. I suspect we may, at the elite level, see a new version of chess online that is more akin to an e-sport and living alongside the conventional game that will return next year, if not before.

Chess portals are seeing record number of players and the competition between them is intense and healthy. We are seeing something common to other sports in which players are signed up for certain competitions and so avoid playing others. Carlsen is already reticent about playing events on Chess.com as his company Magnus AS, which publishes the Play Magnus app, has taken a controlling stake in Chess24.

Chess24 has certainly taken the initiative from Chess.com, which has been hosting big money online tournaments for a couple of years, as well as the hugely successful PRO Chess League. Chess24 broke new ground with the Magnus Carlsen Invitational that included Magnus and seven other top players. It proved a hit with online viewers who were able to view it on Chess24, YouTube, Twitch and significantly, the e-sports channel, DAZN.



Chess24's Banter Blitz Cup once again proved a big hit online and saw an upset in the final as 16-year-old Alireza Firouzja downed Carlsen no less. The champ would soon have his revenge.

Carlsen invited five of the Candidates, plus prodigy Alireza Firouzja and, compulsorily for a speed chess event, Hikaru Nakamura. As we went to press the American was celebrating his 200,000th follower on his Twitch channel.

Blunders and Brilliances

The two-week-long event produced many great games and many great blunders, with a time limit of 15 minutes plus an increment of 10 seconds a move. Every match had to have a winner, with Armageddon deployed when required after a 2-2 draw. The top four went through to the semi-finals, which saw Nakamura against Caruana and Carlsen versus Ding Liren. The latter particularly was an epic match with Carlsen having to come from behind to qualify for the final.

Carlsen-Nakamura was a tremendous tussle. The play replicated their games in the preliminaries until the very end. It was odd – the first seven games between the two went White's way. In the eighth, the fourth game of the final, Nakamura reached a won rook and pawn endgame only for a momentary slip to allow Carlsen enough counterplay to draw and secure the \$70,000 first prize. See inside for a full report.

Alireza Firouzja won one of the last major events before lockdown, in Prague. He followed up by defeating Carlsen in the Banter Blitz final 8½-7½. In the Invitational he won some individual battles, but not too many matches. In the following game he nearly got the better of Carlsen again, but the champion

managed to keep control. Carlsen was full of praise for the 16-year-old prodigy:

"I am very impressed with how he's developed, and with the quality and courage he's shown when facing the world's best. He is dangerous at all times, but it's especially his very good tactical vision and extreme fighting spirit that make him dangerous".

Alexander Grischuk, the most straight-talking of any player at the top level, had a different take on it. While commentating on Chess24, he remarked on Carlsen's difficulty in coming to grips with the prodigy: "I think it's a bit like Kasparov. He convinced himself that Kramnik was going to be the next world champion and then when he played the match against him he just totally could not play... He can fight anyone, but not destiny."

That may be true, but Magnus is not about to cede the crown just yet.

M.Carlsen-A.Firouzja

Magnus Carlsen Invitational (rapid) 2020
Ragozin Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♙b4 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♙f4

A solid way of playing, but Firouzja was in no mood for positional play and tries to rough the champ up with a trendy line.

6... ♘c6 7 ♙c1 ♘e4 8 ♘d2 g5 9 ♙e3 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♙a3

Showing no fear and a novelty I think. 10... ♙d6 11 h4 ♙f4 has also been played, which is very strange.

11 ♖b1 f5 12 g3 0-0



One noteworthy event during the tournament was Giri defeating Carlsen in a match. He prepped rather well here, improving with 12...♗d6!? 13 ♖g1 (13 ♖f3 had been played in 2019 – this is all very new) 13...0-0 14 h4 f4 15 gxf4 g4 16 ♖b5 ♗e7 17 f5 h5 18 ♗g5 c6 19 ♖b2 ♖xf5 20 e4 ♖xg5!! 21 hxg5 ♗g6 22 e5 ♗f8 23 ♗d3 ♗f4 24 ♗f1 ♖xg5. Black has fine play for the exchange and White now cracked, as we'll see on page 10.

13 ♖b3 ♗e7 14 f4 ♗a5 15 ♖c2 c6 16 ♗g2 ♗d6 17 c4!

17 fxg5 f4 would be exactly the sort of mess Black was after.

17...gxf4 18 gxf4 ♗e6!

Black develops, and not 18...♖h4+? 19 ♗f2 ♖xf4 due to 20 cxd5 cxd5 21 ♗xd5+ ♗h8 22 ♖b5 ♗c6 23 ♗xc6 bxc6 24 ♖xc6 ♗e6 25 ♗g3 ♖ac8 26 ♖xc8!.

19 cxd5 cxd5

Also worth a thought was 19...♗xd5!? 20 ♗xd5+ cxd5 21 ♗f3.

20 0-0 ♗h8 21 ♗f3 ♗c4 22 ♖d3 b6

22...♖f7 23 ♗g5 ♖e7 intending ...♗g8 deserved attention.

23 ♗h1 ♖e7

And here the computer prefers 23...♖g8 24 ♗e5 ♖c8.

24 ♗e5

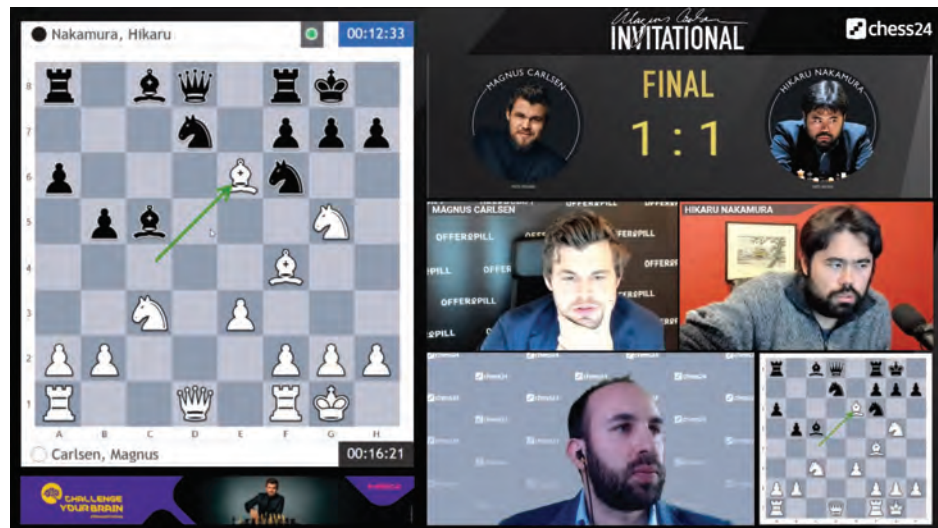


24...♗e5?!

It was difficult to leave the dominating knight in post, but now the dark squares and f5-pawn become exposed.

25 fxex5 ♖g8 26 ♗f4 ♖g6 27 ♗h3 ♖f8 28 ♖f3! ♖h4 29 ♖bf1 ♖h5 30 ♗c1!

The knight on c4 looks good, but is cut off



Commentary anchor Lawrence Trent tries to assess things, while Hikaru Nakamura looks a little worried after 12 ♗xe6, which turned out well for Magnus Carlsen in the final of his own tournament, the Magnus Carlsen Invitational. See inside for how White converted his advantage.

from the action. Now the f-pawn will fall.

30...♖fg8 31 ♗xf5 ♖g2 32 ♗h3!



An easy-to-miss switchback and smartly played as both players were very short of time.

32...♖xe2

Also losing is 32...♗xh3 33 ♖xh3 ♖g6 34 ♖xg6 ♖2xg6 35 ♖g3! ♖xg3 36 hxg3 ♖xg3 37 e6 ♖g6 (or 37...♗d6 38 ♗f4) 38 e7.

33 ♖xe2 ♗xh3 34 ♖g1 1-0

After 34...♖xg1+ 35 ♗xg1 ♖g4+ 36 ♗h1 followed by ♗h6 the best Black can hope for is a lost endgame.

A tremendous win for Nakamura from the preliminaries:

H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen

Magnus Carlsen Invitational (rapid) 2020
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♗f6 5 0-0 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗c5

This should now be known as the Yurtaev variation, having been attributed to that highly creative player by Peter Svidler in the Chess24 commentary.

7 a4 ♖b8 8 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 9 d4 ♗xd4

10 ♖xd4 d6 11 f4 ♗c6 12 ♖c3 ♗e7

13 axb5 axb5 14 e5 ♗e4 15 ♖f3

15 ♖e1 is standard.

15...♗c5 16 ♗a2 0-0 17 ♗e3 ♗b7?!



Two sharp alternatives are 17...♗f5 18 b4 ♗a4 19 ♗b3 ♖d7 20 ♗d2 ♗c6 21 ♗e4!? and 17...♗f5 18 ♗f2 ♗b7 19 ♖h3 ♗c8 when White can repeat or play 20 ♗d2 ♗d4 21 ♖h5, as 21...♗xc2? (21...g6) 22 ♖ad1 gives him a dangerous initiative.

18 ♖h3 ♗e4 19 ♗c3 ♗xc3 20 bxc3 ♗d5 21 f5 ♗xa2

Black also had 21...♖a8 22 ♗xd5 ♖xa1!, and if 23 ♖xa1 ♗xd5 or 23 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 24 ♖xa1 dxe5.

22 ♖xa2 dxe5 23 f6 gxf6?!

23...♗d5 24 fxg7 ♖e8 25 ♗h6 may have looked scary, but is very good for Black after 25...♖b6.

24 ♗h6 ♖e8

After 24...♖d6!? 25 ♖g4+ ♗g6 26 h4 ♖b6+ 27 ♗h1 ♖fe8 28 h5 ♖e6 29 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 30 hxg6 hxg6 I'd rather have the pawns than the piece in a speed game.

25 ♖a6! ♖b6

Matters are getting out of hand. Black cannot countenance ♖a6xf6, but if 25...c6 26 ♖xc6! followed by 26...♗xc6? 27 ♖g4+ or 26...♖b6 27 ♖g4+ ♗g6 28 ♖xf6 ♖xc6 29 ♖xc6 ♖a8 30 ♖c7 f5!? 31 ♖d1 and the game reels on. With hindsight, this might have been best.

26 ♖xb6 cxb6 27 ♖g3+ ♗g6 28 h4 f5 29 h5 f4



chess24

Magnus Carlsen
CHESS TOUR

MAGNUS CARLSEN INVITATIONAL
» APRIL 18 – MAY 3 (\$250,000)

LINDORES ABBEY RAPID CHALLENGE
» MAY 19 – JUNE 3 (\$150,000)

ONLINE CHESS MASTERS
» JUNE 20 – JULY 5 (\$150,000)

LEGENDS OF CHESS
» JULY 21 – AUGUST 5 (\$150,000)

GRAND FINAL
» AUGUST 9 – 20 (\$300,000)

PHOTO: FRED JONNY

A most welcome initiative, not least for those stuck and even, perhaps, working from home these days. It really is quality chess galore online.



30 hxg6!!

The point is 30...fxg3 31 gxf7+ ♔h8 32 fxe8 ♖+ ♗xe8 33 ♖f8+ ♗xf8 34 ♔xf8.

30...hxg6 31 ♗g4

Black's king needs constant protection and Carlsen's next move undermines his defence against the threats on the dark squares.

31...♗c8?

31...♗e7! 32 ♔g5 f6 or 31...♗d6 32 ♖d1 ♗c6 33 ♗g5 ♗c5+ would still resist.

32 ♗h4 ♗c5+ 33 ♔h2 ♗d6 34 ♔g5 f5

34...♔g7 35 ♖d1! ♗e6 36 ♗h6+ ♔g8 37 ♖d3 is also hopeless.



35 ♖f3 e4 36 ♖h3 f3+ 37 ♔f4 ♗d7 38 ♗h8+ ♔f7 39 ♖h7+ ♔e6 40 ♗e5# 1-0

FIDE soon got into the act with the FIDE Chess.com Online Nations Cup, which included teams from the USA, China, Europe, India, Russia and the Rest of World. In a sign of the times, Garry Kasparov agreed to captain Europe. China prevailed, just.

A full report next time, but do look out then for the sacrificial attack that secured the title for China. Peter Svidler described Yu Yangyi's win over Wesley So as "Some kind of modern masterpiece". Yu Yangyi top-scored for China with 7½/10, bettered only by Fabiano Caruana's 7½/9, who luxuriated in playing board two behind Nakamura.

A Busy Summer Online

There is a huge amount to look forward over the summer after this announcement from Chess24 just before we went to press:

"World Champion Magnus Carlsen today revealed his \$1 million vision for a new online chess tour designed to cement the game's future in the public eye.

"Four super-tournaments culminating in a Grand Final in August will become the new 'majors' for online chess, the Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour.

"It follows the breakout success of the Magnus Carlsen Invitational which shattered all records for online viewership and now serves as the first leg of the Tour."

By the time readers receive the magazine, the Lindores Abbey Rapid will be drawing to a close. You can then look forward to the Online Chess Masters, the Legends of Chess, and the Grand Final, all on Chess24.

The world champion added: "The Invitational was a lot of fun and we heard great feedback from the players, our broadcast partners and

the viewers. While physical chess tournaments and sports are still either cancelled or postponed, bringing an entire chess tour online is what I feel is right for chess now."

Guilty Until Proved Innocent

Until recently, at least for most of us, internet chess was throwaway stuff. A few games of blitz, maybe bullet, or correspondence. Nothing at stake really and, because of that, a great form of relaxation. I'm sure most readers, like me, will have lost themselves in internet chess for hours on end sometimes. And long may that continue.

While the new tournaments for elite players are a great innovation, events for club players, such as the hugely successful 4NCL Online League, are very difficult to administrate. Let's be clear: as things stand, it is absolutely impossible to rule out the possibility of cheating. The online providers understand this and to their great credit have invested a lot of resources, as well as ongoing time, energy and research to develop better anti-cheating methods.

Some of these are very sophisticated; one might even say intrusive. I only know a little about some of these techniques and it would not be in the interests of the providers, or the millions of players who rely on the maintenance of sporting integrity, to release the information I know. This sporting integrity is of vital importance to the continuing success of the online platforms, and to all of us who play online and want the efforts of the providers to succeed.

Nevertheless, the issue is a very serious one that, in my view, threatens to undermine most of the new competitions below the elite level. To borrow a phrase from virus testing; it seems very likely that there are occasionally

some false positives. This means people can be accused of cheating and disqualified in a fashion that will lead to them being identified, with all the attendant consequences.

Understandably, the online chess platforms jealously guard the methods they use to determine whether a player has cheated. In practice, this makes it impossible, as things currently stand, to create a fair appeals procedure. An Appeals Committee should be able to consider the evidence that led to the suspension of a player's online account. This evidence may often include methods that are closely-guarded secrets; indeed, they could be considered as IP of great value. Therefore, in practice it may be impossible to have a fair process.

We already have an excellent anti-cheating tool, a version of which is used in all online platforms. Algorithms developed by IM Kenneth Regan analyse games and compare the moves with those that would be played by a variety of computer engines. Regan's program generates a probability that a player was cheating. Most important over-the-board games are already put through the algorithm. Ken's algorithms are highly trusted by everyone from FIDE down to arbiters, but I don't believe that they are completely foolproof. In over-the-board games there is usually physical evidence to back up the evidence from the algorithm.

The development of governance for online tournaments is only at a nascent stage. It's quite apparent that the arbiters are learning as they go as well. A recent incident in the 4NCL put this into sharp focus, as did my lengthy analysis and consideration of some games where there was allegedly cheating, both in the 4NCL and elsewhere. There is no doubt there is a huge amount of cheating going on. The results of Chess.com's recent amnesty is testimony to that.

I am not alone in being worried about the possibility of lawsuits, damage to reputations, and damage to the providers. Would you play in an online tournament if there was a risk of you being wrongly accused of cheating, even if it is only a small one? It's a decision that has to be left to the individual at this stage, but there is more that could be done to ensure a better atmosphere and fairer play all round.

The first principle must surely be that the tournament organiser should ultimately decide if the results of a game should be annulled in a competition, with that only done after a full appeals process in which all the evidence is available. This will require a greater degree of co-operation between providers and tournament organisers than is currently the case, or perhaps the assistance of a third party such as the FIDE Fair Play Commission.

I know of one event where the organisers have been asked to sign an onerous NDA by the online providers before they will release details of their anti-cheating methods. They are unwilling to do so. In the UK most tournament organisers are hardworking volunteers – why would they want to take on a risk like that?

We have to gradually move to a situation



Ramsgate, 1929. From Sultan Khan's personal papers, now in the care of his eldest son, Ather Sultan.

where games played at home replicate the tournament hall set up to a far greater degree. Something that records a player's screen would help and also the clear understanding that no other chess or communications software is running on the machine being used to play. That ought to be verifiable. Also, as was done at the recent Sitges Open, webcams running continuously do help.

Clearly more can be done, but these measures will help. We will have to accept that nothing will prevent a very determined cheat. We must have a fair appeals process where the player accused understands, at least in general terms, the evidence against him. An Appeals Committee must have access to all the evidence.

I was so concerned I recently wrote to colleagues on the ECF board:

It is one thing for the providers to police themselves and for people to take part on that basis. It is quite another for the ECF to outsource this in official competitions. There are potentially damaging consequences to reputations and in the case of juniors, confidence and chess careers. I don't feel we as ECF can responsibly outsource our jurisdiction and, unless I have misunderstood, we seem to be doing so.

There is a huge deficit in the governance of online cheating. What happens should an appeal be successful? What will be the attitude of the providers in that instance? As I understand it, they will not reinstate a player.

There are issues of confidentiality. We can certainly agree not to publish the names of people who are found to have cheated, but what will happen to their results? Will they mysteriously disappear? Will this then lead to both players being under suspicion?

At the very least I want to be able to see and hear my opponent during the game. Of

course, I'm not suggesting this for every online game! We all enjoy the throwaway stuff, but for officially rated tournament games, a more formal and rigorous environment seems appropriate.

Readers' views would be most welcome.

A Myth Buster

I am enjoying Daniel King's new book on Sultan Khan enormously. In case you missed it, there was an excerpt in the May issue. As well as the chess, I'm learning about Sultan Khan's life and the politics of the time from 1929-1933 when the future of India, and what was to become Pakistan, was being negotiated.

I had no idea that Sultan Khan had such little experience of modern-day chess until 1926, as the rules employed in what was British Colonial India at the time differed from the western form of the game, not least with regards to the pawns at the start of a game. Khan still knew very little opening theory and lacked tournament experience on his arrival in England in 1929.

CHESS received a letter from Sultan Khan's granddaughter which also bust some big myths. According to Atiyab Sultan, her grandfather was not a servant with little formal education, as he is depicted on the cover of the book. I learnt from Dr. Sultan that he was an educated man, a landowner and came from a respected family of 'Pirs' or religious guides. We hope to have a more detailed article on Sultan Khan's early life in a subsequent issue.

At the very end of the book Dan suggests that the chess federations of India, Pakistan and England unite to appeal to FIDE to award Sultan Khan the GM title. I would certainly support that. I'd also suggest the publishers consider a second edition with a revised cover. It's clear from the letter the family feel strongly about how Sultan Khan is portrayed.