

15th December 2016

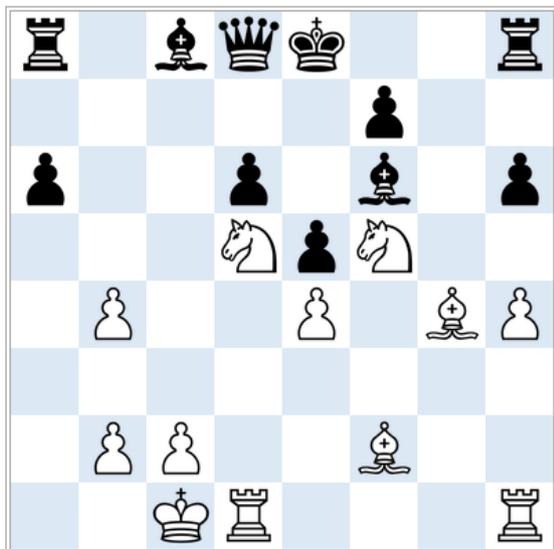
LONDON CHESS CLASSIC DAY 6 ROUND-UP

After the rest day it seems like the players came back to the board all guns blazing as we witnessed the shortest yet most exciting round of the event so far! The thrilling action stretched beyond the Auditorium too, as David Howell struck right back in the British KO Championship Final and there is a new leader in the FIDE Open. To top it all off Jon Speelman took on 16 opponents in a simultaneous.

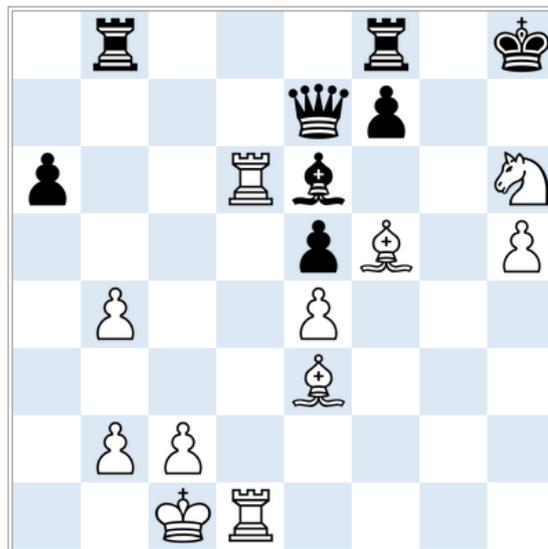


Wesley So is still the man of the hour in London (Photo: Lennart Ootes)

To highlight just what a bloodthirsty event it has been, one might point to the fact that two thirds through the tournament, we've already had more decisive games than we did in the entire tournament last year. In the words of GM Yasser Seirawan, this round was a 'chess lovers' delight' and there were sacrifices in all five games, which could very well be a first in an event of this calibre. In the first game to finish we saw an unrecognisable Veselin Topalov self-destruct against tournament and GCT leader Wesley So, who retains the tournament lead with an impressive score of 4.5/6. Fabiano Caruana stayed on his tail as he took out Hikaru Nakamura in an amazing all-American encounter. After the game, Fabiano commented that he had seen the position after 21.Nf5 before, but that he hadn't analysed it much deeper since it was 'one of the saddest positions (for Black) I've ever seen'. There followed a bizarre double blunder, since after 21...Rb8? 22.Nxf6+ Qxf6 Caruana could have pretty much won on the spot with 23.Nxd6+, but instead 23.Rxd6 gave Nakamura the chance to untangle a little. Caruana continued putting on pressure and Nakamura cracked with 28...Qe7, but strangely Fabiano missed the winning shot 29.Nxf7+! (he said after the game he 'didn't see much in this game'), before playing it on the next move after 29.b5 Qe8 30.Nxf7+!, prompting resignation after 30...Rxf7 31.Rxe6 Qxb5 32.Rh6+.



Position after 21.Nf5!



Position after 28...Qe7, when 29.Nxf7+! was winning

Levon Aronian meanwhile over-pressed against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave after showing great opening preparation. In the words of the Frenchman ‘the opening didn’t go great and I was playing for two results, but not the good two’. This is the first win in this event for last year’s joint winner, who said he needed to improve his play, but was nevertheless happy to have taken home the full point today.

And it could actually have been four decisive results, had Anish Giri not thrown away what looked like a close to winning position against Vishy Anand, after the latter played a piece sacrifice which garnered three pawns but also left his king a little exposed. Finally, the last game of the day to finish was also the most balanced one, as Vladimir Kramnik failed to unsettle Michael Adams and a draw was agreed after Mickey sacrificed a piece to force a perpetual check.



Caruana decided the all-American duel in his favour (Photo: Lennart Ootes)

Game 5 of the British Knockout Championship Final was David Howell’s last one with the white pieces and the defending Champion made good use of them as he managed to level the contest after losing to Nigel Short yesterday. It all seemed to be going well for Short until a blunder on move 25 forced him to resign just 8 moves later. He will have the white pieces in the last game of the match tomorrow and it promises to be another spectacular game, followed, possibly, by a playoff.

In the FIDE Open, Etienne Bacrot beat Aravindh with the black pieces, thus taking the sole lead himself with 7/8. Aravindh is still the closest pursuer together with his countryman Abhijeet Gupta and Bacrot's compatriot Sebastien Maze as all three of them stand on 6.5/8. Tomorrow's last round pairings will see Gupta take on Bacrot with the black pieces while Maze faces Aravindh on board 2.



It was a good day for David Howell and Etienne Bacrot (Photo: Lennart Ootes)

The second simultaneous display of the week saw GM Jon Speelman take on 16 opponents. Jon is a famed chessboard maverick, as well as a former World Number 4 and World Championship semi-finalist. Today he scored 13.5 points, with one of his two defeats coming against Daniel Young, who when he isn't busy beating Grandmasters does a fantastic job in London as a member of the Chess in Schools and Communities staff.



Jon Speelman having a think during his simul (Photo: Lennart Ootes)

You can find all the photos from the festival, taken by Lennart Ootes, on the [following page](#). The results and tournament details are all on the [LCC website](#) and you can also download the PGN files of the games by clicking on the following links:

- London Chess Classic: <http://live.londonchessclassic.com/pgn/lcc2016/lcc06/games.pgn>
- British KO Ch'ship: <http://live.londonchessclassic.com/pgn/bco2016/round13/games.pgn>
- FIDE Open: <http://live.londonchessclassic.com/pgn/fide/round8/games.pgn>

All the live games will be broadcast at: <http://live.londonchessclassic.com/>

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