



## PRESS RELEASE

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# MVL & NAKAMURA FIGHT TO A STANDSTILL IN 1ST FINAL GAME

- France's Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and American Hikaru Nakamura split the honours in a keenly contested Main Line Grunfeld in Game 1 of the London Chess Classic Final, the concluding event of the Grand Chess Tour, which was played at the Olympia Conference Centre.
- The result ratchets up the tension for Game 2, which will be [broadcast live from 14:00 UTC on Sunday](#), as a win would give a lead of 6 points going into the Rapid and Blitz portion of the match on Monday.
- In the Third Place Playoff match, Levon Aronian challenged Fabiano Caruana strongly in an Italian Game, but the players acquiesced to a draw by repetition as Caruana neutralized Aronian's initiative.
- Game 1 in the British Knockout Final and Third Place Playoff matches also finished in well-contested draws.

**LONDON** (December 14, 2018) – Hikaru Nakamura took on Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in a main line of his favourite Grunfeld Defence in Game 1 of the London Chess Classic on Saturday but failed to achieve any advantage. After Nakamura's far advanced passed d-pawn fell, MVL emerged with a small endgame edge, but was unable to convert it and a draw was agreed in 50 moves.

The result leaves the players on 3 points each going into Game 2. In total, the Grand Chess Tour Final will be decided over 2 Classical, 2 Rapid and 4 Blitz games, with a total of 28 points at stake. The winner of the Grand Chess Tour Final will pocket \$120,000, while the runner-up will take home \$80,000.

In the Third Place Playoff match, Levon Aronian caused Fabiano Caruana some awkward moments with a sharp pawn sacrifice for the initiative in an Italian Game, but Caruana was able to neutralize Aronian's play and the players opted for a repetition after a series of checks against Caruana's uncastled king.

In the British Knockout Final, Gawain Jones managed to neutralize Luke McShane's Italian Game, rounding up an insufficiently defended extra kingside pawn to force a drawn king and pawn ending.

In the British KO Third Place Playoff, Mickey Adams pressed David Howell strongly in an offbeat Two Knights Caro-Kann. The game was drawn in 41 moves, when Adams was the exchange up for a pawn in the ending.

[Full regulations governing the London Chess Classic Final and Third Place Playoff matches can be viewed here.](#)



*Hikaru Nakamura and Maxime-Vachier Lagrave contest a Main Line Grunfeld in Game 1 of their Grand Chess Tour Final at Olympia Conference Centre in London. The game was drawn in 50 moves. (Photo: Lennart Ootes)*

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)

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*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.*