

## Grand Chess Tour Final: Dance of the Four Queens Saves MVL

- ***Ding Liren and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave draw first Classical game of Grand Chess Tour Final after spectacular tussle involving 4 queens on the board***
- ***Magnus Carlsen overcomes sterling resistance by Lev Aronian in third-place playoff match***

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave performed another act of escapology to draw the first game of the 2019 Grand Chess Tour Final against Ding Liren, surviving a death-defying four-queen ending after appearing to be dead lost.

Ding came tantalisingly close to winning after deploying a brilliant attacking concept – but the Frenchman survived after Ding missed a couple of clear wins in the queen and pawn endgame.

Taking play into the four-queen ending – a rare sight in tournament play – looked risky for MVL, but he found a way for his king to avoid being mated by accurately negotiating a long series of checks from Ding's queens.

The game built slowly to a crescendo after a quiet variation of the Ruy Lopez, from which Ding emerged with an edge thanks to an improving bishop and MVL's out-of-play knight. With a queen and bishop vs. queen and knight semi-endgame on the board, Ding exploded the position with his bold 34...g5! pawn sacrifice, which took a crowbar to both MVL's and his own kingside.

After at least one clear winning line was missed, MVL found a way to keep posing problems for Ding with 66 g6! Taking that pawn would have led to a technically won queen and pawn ending, but one that may have been taken a long time to win.

Instead, Ding went for the four queens, counting on having a vital tempo to attack MVL's king, but he appeared have missed some defensive resources and eventually had to settle for a draw on move 90.

In the third-place playoff match, Magnus Carlsen got back to winning ways over Lev Aronian, securing a 6-0 lead in the third-place playoff match.

From a modest London System, Carlsen secured a slight edge with the bishop pair, and then upped the stakes by grabbing a hot pawn on a6, pinning his own knight.

Despite the misplacing of Magnus's knight, he was able to negotiate the resulting complications, reaching an advantageous position where he had sacrificed the exchange for two pawns. Although Aronian put up stiff resistance, the World Champion was eventually able to steer play into a pawn-up rook and opposite-colour bishops ending that was very difficult to hold for the Armenian.

In the final of the British Knockout Championship, which finishes on Saturday, Mickey Adams secured a big 12-4 lead over David Howell over four Rapidplay games (2 wins and 2 draws), and thus went into the final six Blitz games needing just 3 more points to win the title.

The London Chess Classic FIDE Open wrapped up Friday with another triumph for 13-year-old Indian prodigy Praggnanandhaa, who won the tournament with 7.5/9, just ahead on tie-break of young Australian GM Anton Smirnov.

For more information about the full range of events at the LCC, contact our team at: [info@londonchessclassic.com](mailto:info@londonchessclassic.com)

Visit our website: [www.londonchessclassic.com](http://www.londonchessclassic.com)

Follow us on Twitter: [@london\\_chess](https://twitter.com/london_chess)

Tim Wall, [@London\\_Chess](https://twitter.com/London_Chess), press officer, London Chess Classic