

For Immediate Release

GCT Finals Day 6: Ding Liren wins 2019 Grand Chess Tour

- China's Ding Liren secures the 2019 Grand Chess Tour title with an impressive win and a trouble-free draw in the Rapid games on Day 6, winning with an emphatic 15-5 scoreline
- A confident Ding talks of his prospects in the upcoming Candidates tournament, saying, 'When I am in my best shape, I can compete with anyone else'
- Magnus wraps up third-place playoff match against Lev Aronian, despite blundering into a surprise checkmate in the first Rapid game

Ding Liren became the Grand Chess Tour Champion for the first time, triumphing over Maxime Vachier-Lagrave at the London Chess Classic to clinch the title 15-5 and take the winner's prize of \$150,000. The Chinese star was never in trouble in the Final, crossing the finish line after just two Rapid games on Sunday.

In the first Rapid game – virtually MVL's last chance to get back into the match after trailing 9-3 in the Classical games – Ding efficiently punished MVL's inaccurate opening play in a Modern Benoni to win in 39 moves.

In the second Rapid game, MVL achieved little against Ding's hanging pawn duo in the centre, and despite later saddling Ding with an isolated pawn, the Chinese player had enough piece activity to comfortably hold the balance.

MVL, who earlier had won an epic Semi-Final encounter with Magnus Carlsen, never really got going in the Final, and had to be content with the second prize of \$100,000.

In the Third-Place Playoff match between Carlsen and Lev Aronian, the World Champion was coasting to victory in the first Rapid game when he suddenly blundered into a checkmate.

Bouncing back in the second Rapid game, however, Magnus was able to wrap up the match 16-8, with 2 blitz games left to play. Carlsen took home the third prize of \$60,000, while Aronian collected \$40,000 for fourth.

Malcolm Pein, London Chess Classic Tournament Director, said at the prizegiving ceremony: "It's been a great honour for the London Classic to host the 2019 Grand Chess Tour Finals, which has produced some fantastic chess and a worthy winner."

Receiving the Grand Chess Tour trophy from Malcolm Pein, an emotional but thoughtful Ding said: "I feel very happy after six days of competition when I can completely focus on the games. It shows that when I am in my best shape, I can compete with anyone else."

Also taking place on Sunday at London Olympia was the Super Open Blitz, which was won by England's Gawain Jones, who defeated French GM Tigran Gharamian in the final.

The final day of the London Classic was enlivened by the guest appearance of Hollywood star Woody Harrelson, a keen amateur chess player, who made the ceremonial first move for Magnus Carlsen in the second Rapid game. Unlike his first move in the first game of the 2018 World Championship,

when Harrelson jokingly played the wrong move for Fabiano Caruana, this time the actor played 1 d4, as requested by the World Champion.

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