

For Immediate Release

Luke McShane & Russell Picot win Pro-Biz Cup

Luke McShane and Russell Picot took first place in the **2019 Pro-Biz Cup**, finishing ahead of the formidable duo of World Champion **Magnus Carlsen** and **Demis Hassabis**, the CEO of artificial intelligence company Google DeepMind. After scores were tied in three rounds of pairs chess, Picot won a dramatic playoff game in single combat against Hassabis.

The result underlines the strong relationship between the UK's top players and London's financial sector, which has existed since the days of the English Chess Explosion of the 1970s and 80s. Picot is the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the HSBC Pension Fund, while McShane works as a trader in the City and has been described as the "world's strongest amateur player".

The three-round rapidplay pairs tournament saw the players in the [Grand Chess Tour Finals](#) and the [British Knockout Championship](#) partnering with leading businesspeople. Taking place on the rest day for both events, the Pro-Biz Cup was generously hosted by the [Royal Automobile Club](#) on Pall Mall in central London.

Participants and spectators enjoyed a fun and exciting day of pairs chess played amid the beautiful surroundings of one of London's most prestigious private clubs, which is renowned as the traditional venue for the annual Varsity chess match. Players took their places under portraits of famous club alumni, past and present, and the event raised much-appreciated funds for the charity [Chess in Schools in Communities](#).

The fun event has become a well-established part of the London Chess Classic, with businesspeople paired up with the world's top players. Games are played at rapid time controls, and while the games are mostly no-consultation, pairs are allowed to periodically consult with each other in two 1-minute timeouts.

In Round 1, the teams of Magnus Carlsen & Demis Hassabis; Lev Aronian & Justin Baptie; Luke McShane & Russell Picot; and Gawain Jones & Nigel Povah were victorious on 2/2; while by Round 2, Magnus and Demis had pulled clear with 4/4. The turning point came in Round 3, when the World Champion's team were held to a draw by Aronian and Baptie,

forcing stalemate after a pretty series of perpetual rook sacrifices could not be avoided.

This allowed McShane and Picot to catch up on 5/6, and in the playoff, Picot took on Hassabis to decide the Pro-Biz title. After a tense struggle in a Sicilian Maroczy Bind, Picot broke through Hassabis's defences, forcing a winning king hunt.

Spectators at the event enjoyed entertaining and informative commentary in the adjoining room by IM Lawrence Trent, ably assisted by analysis from the players after they finished their games. Extra funds will also be raised for Chess in Schools and Communities through the auctioning of chessboards signed by the top players.

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