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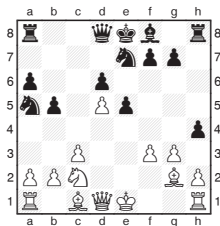


All eyes on Carlsen at IET London

One of the most eagerly awaited events this year will be the FIDE Candidates, due to the fascinating field which will be held at IET London, Savoy Place, WC2 from March 14 to April 1 (www.worldchess.com).

All eyes will be on the hot favourite, Magnus Carlsen, whose form could hardly be better as he amassed a substantial 10/13 to win the Tata Wijk aan Zee event.

As usual Carlsen ground out some long endgame wins, but when Hikaru Nakamura provoked him with some opening liberties, punishment was swift.



M. Carlsen - H. Nakamura
Tata Steel A Wijk aan Zee 2013

15.f3-f4

The classical response to a flank attack, responding in the centre.

15... Ne7-f5
16.g3-g4 h4-h3
17.Bg2-e4 Nf5-h4

It was better to disrupt White's development with 17...Qd8-h4+ 18.Ke1-f1 Nf5-e7.

18.0-0 g7-g6
19.Kg1-h1

Magnus tucks his king safely into the corner.

19... Bf8-g7

I like 19...f7-f5, contesting the light squares here more.

20.f4-f5 g6xf5
21.g4xf5 Nh4-g2

After this, it is one-way traffic. Nakamura had to consolidate his pieces with 21...Bg7-f6.

22.f5-f6 Bg7-f8

After 22...Bg7xf6 23.Qd1-f3 Rh8-h4 24.Bc1-g5, Black is in trouble, but things are not much better once the bishop returns to base.

Over the next few moves, Magnus's forces effortlessly migrate to better posts and Black's position implodes.

23.Qd1-f3 Qd8-c7

24.Nc2-b4 Na5-b7

25.Nb4-c6 Nb7-c5

26.Be4-f5 Nc5-d7

27.Bc1-g5 Rh8-g8

28.Qf3-h5 Nd7-b6

29.Bf5-e6

Black hardly has any playable moves and, unsurprisingly, there is a swift conclusion.

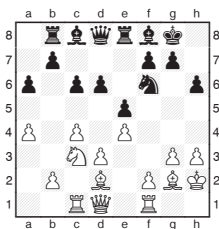
29... Rg8xg5

30.Qh5xg5 f7xe6

31.d5xe6

Black resigned, as 31...Qc7xc6 32.f6-f7 is mate.

Another strong contender, Levon Aronian, was also in good shape in Wijk aan Zee after a lacklustre conclusion to 2012.



L. Aronian - Wang, Hao
Tata Steel A Wijk aan Zee 2013

15... Nf6-d7

This is too slow. Now was a good moment to start queenside action with 15...b7-b5.

16.Bd2-e3 a6-a5

17.f2-f4 Nd7-c5

18.Rc1-c2

White's greater space and lead in development exert unpleasant pressure on Black's position.

18... Bc8-e6

19.f4-f5 Be6-d7

20.Bg2-f3 b7-b5

Opening the game is a bad idea, especially as it presents White's knight with a central outpost. 20...Bf8-e7 awaiting developments was better.

21.a4xb5 c6xb5

22.Bf3-h5 b5xc4

White's attacking potential with all his army ready to attack the black monarch is well demonstrated in the line: 22...b5-b4 23.Nc3-d5 Bd7-a4 24.Bh5xf7+ Kg8xf7 25.Qd1-h5+ Kf7-g8 26.Be3xh6 Ba4xc2 27.f5-f6 Rb8-b7 28.f6-f7+ Rb7xf7 29.Qh5xf7+ Kg8-h8 30.Nd5-f6.

23.d3xc4 Bf8-e7

After this, Aronian wins material by force 23...Nc5-a4 had to be tried.

24.Be3xc5 d6xc5

25.Qd1-d5 Re8-f8

26.Rf1-d1 Bd7-e8

27.Qd5xe5 Be7-f6

28.Qe5xc5 Qd8-b6

29.Qc5xb6 Rb8xb6

30.c4-c5

Only the technical phase of the game remains and Levon rarely slips up there.

30... Rb6-b4

31.Nc3-d5 Be8-a4

32.Nd5xb4 a5xb4

33.Rc2-c4 Ba4xd1

34.Bh5xd1 Rf8-d8

35.Bd1-b3 Rd8-d2+

36.Kh2-h1 Rd2xb2

The last try was 36...Rd2-d4, as it is not clear if White is winning after the exchange of rooks.

However, 37.Rc4-c1 Rd4xe4

38.c5-c6 Re4-e8 39.Rc1-a1

Re8-c8 40.Ra1-a7 looks

good enough.

37.Rc4xb4 Bf6-e5

38.Rb4-b7

Black resigned, as

38...Kg8-h7 39.c5-c6 Rb2-

b1+ 40.Kh1-g2 Rb1-c1

41.Bb3xf7 is winning.