

Aronian Back on Top in St Louis

CH
STIC CENTER
Louis
ESS TOUR

2015
SINQUEFIELD CUP
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI
CHESS CLUB AND SCHOLASTIC CENTER
2015
SINQUEFIELD CUP
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI
GRAND CHESS TOUR
2015



THe leafy streets of the Central West End in Saint Louis seem an unlikely place to be one of the chess centres of the world, but after the third Sinquefield Cup such claims may not be as far-fetched as they sounded when first made a few years ago.

An affluent suburb about 10 kilometres from the Saint Louis city centre, the Central West End features the three storey Saint Louis Chess Club and Scholastic Centre, an adjoining chess-themed restaurant - the Kingside Diner, the World Chess Hall of Fame across the road and a house for visiting

Article by Ian Rogers

Photography by Cathy Rogers



Grandmaster lecturers nearby – all courtesy of extensive private funding from Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield.

Having hosted multiple US Championships and two previous Sinquefield Cups, the most recent tournament at the Saint Louis CCSC, the second leg of the Grand Chess Tour, was the icing on the cake. The chess world may have been spoilt for super-tournaments in recent years, but the 2015 Sinquefield Cup, with 9 of the top 11 players in the world, pushes it into a category of historic tournaments with no tail, alongside AVRO 1938 and Las Palmas 1996.

SINQUEFIELD CUP

After his psychological collapse at the first Grand Chess Tour event, Norway Chess, Magnus Carlsen was expected to resume his run of successes but it was Levon Aronian who stole the show.

18 months ago Aronian was seen as Carlsen's likely challenger for the world title, but a disastrous 2014 Candidates tournament saw Aronian's hopes dashed and a gradual fall from grace for the affable Armenian.

Aronian's low point was reached recently when he dropped out of the world's top ten for the first time in a decade.

When Aronian began the 2015 Sinquefield Cup he was ranked ninth of the ten competitors and when Aronian gave a pre-tournament interview saying that he had come to Saint Louis to win, it was viewed as good-humoured braggadocio.

Yet, adopting a new persona of chess caveman, Aronian beat Fabiano Caruana and Wesley So with violent attacks to share the tournament lead as early as Round 4 with early pace-setter Veselin Topalov, who had beaten Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura in the first two rounds. Most of all, Aronian appeared happy; it seemed that his profession was no longer a chore for him.

Topalov faded, as did Carlsen's mid-tournament challenge, leaving Aronian a comfortable winner of the third Sinquefield Cup, a point clear of the field.

Asked to explain his success, Aronian said that his hangover from the 2014 Candidates tournament had lasted long enough and "after so many setbacks, I needed to show to myself that I was still capable of something."

The 32-year-old netted \$US 75,000 for the win, saying that he had not changed his game significantly but merely sought to be more aggressive when the opportunity arose.

Aronian had prepared for the tournament by joining Carlsen in a training camp in Long Island, New York, and the World Champion was one of many who greeted Aronian's win with pleasure, saying "I'm very happy for him - he hasn't played this well for a while and I'm happy he is getting his game together."

Kasparov was even more enthusiastic, tweeting "The chess world is a better place when Aronian is playing well!"

For Carlsen the tournament, while not a disaster like the first Grand Chess Tour tournament in Stavanger, was a source of endless frustration. A repeat first round loss to Topalov - "This time I was beaten fair and square," said Carlsen - was followed by a desperately lucky win against Fabiano Caruana; a game where both players reached move 40 with seconds to spare but it was Caruana who managed to throw away a likely win with his final move of the time control.

A come-back seemed likely as Carlsen reached a tie for first with Aronian after five rounds, but a second loss with White, this time to Grischuk after faltering in a long defensive task, left Carlsen unable to recover.

Last year at the Sinquefield Cup Veselin Topalov had lost his first two games but fought back to reach 50%. In 2015 the Grand Chess Tour leader suffered the reverse fate, winning the first two rounds but still eventually finishing on 50%.

Three other players joined Carlsen in the tie for second. Anish Giri won his first game but then drew eight without going close to winning a game. The tournament's youngest player is becoming one of the hardest players in the world to beat but has yet to seriously threaten for a major tournament title.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave belied his low ranking - he was world number 16 when the tournament started - to cause problems for many opponents and beat



The players' refreshments room

Topalov convincingly. Vachier-Lagrave felt that Saint Louis together with his solid result in Stavanger showed that he was comfortable among the world's elite; true enough, but his sharp style also leaves room for disappointments (such as Vachier-Lagrave's last place in the Khanty-Mansiysk Grand Prix tournament earlier in 2015).

Hikaru Nakamura can claim to be the most consistent player of 2015 following wins in Gibraltar, Zurich, Khanty Mansiysk and the US Championship, plus second place finishes in Stavanger and the Sinquefeld Cup.

Nakamura's 5/9 score was achieved the hard way, playing 100 more moves than any other competitor. Tough endgame losses to Topalov and Aronian were counterbalanced by wins against Anand and So – the latter game being the tournament brilliancy.

However it was his final round marathon against Grischuk that earned Nakamura the most kudos; the American took great risks but ultimately prevailed after more than six hours. "The last few games have probably taken a few years off my life," said a relieved Nakamura after his last game. "I didn't deserve plus one."

The rest of the field suffered various degrees of disappointment.

Grischuk dropped from second to sixth with his final round loss, while Anand and Caruana never recovered from losing their first two games. Wesley So, 21, has only begun competing in elite tournaments recently and his inexperience showed when he lost three consecutive games mid-tournament, two of them with White.

For all the games please refer to the PGN file.



Above: The entrance to the St Louis chess club
Below: Spectators in the video viewing room



Aronian, Levon 2808

Caruana, Fabiano 2765

Sinquefield Cup 2015 (1)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3
Be7 5.Bf4 O-O 6.e3 Nbd7 7.c5 Ne4**

"I was not so much expecting this line as hoping for it," admitted Aronian. "7...Ne4 is, I think, an idea of Kasimdzhanov [Caruana's second IR] and Fabiano has played it twice.

8.Rc1 "Black's idea is to take on c3 and play b6, which will be fine if White has a pawn on c3," said Aronian.

8...Nxc3 9.Rxc3 b6



10.c6 "I really like this position for White," said Aronian, "but maybe that is because I don't understand all the subtleties of the position!"

10...Nf6 11.a3 a5 12.Bd3 Ne4

13.Rc2

"I considered 13.Rc1 but am quite happy to follow the young people," said Aronian, emulating the retreat played by Giri in a game against Caruana.

13...f6!? The first new idea. "Of course 13...Ba6 is playable but after 14.Bxa6 Rxa6 15.Ne5 Bd6 16.Nd7 the knight on d7 is very annoying," explained Aronian. "Giri only drew from this position against Caruana but I had some ideas how to improve."

14.Qe2! "Now if I can prevent him from playing ...e5 his bishop on c8 will be dead," explained Aronian.

14...Bd6 15.O-O g5!? Played quickly, as had been all Caruana's moves up to this point. "

15...Qe7 was more natural but Caruana had probably seen some deep problem with it," said Aronian.



16.Bxd6 Nxd6 Diagram

"On 16...Qxd6 I was considering 17.Nd2 Nxd2 18.Rxd2!? Qxc6 19.f4!," said Aronian, "though I would probably only have played this if I worked out the attack to mate!"

17.Re1!? Aronian was extremely happy with this move. "White wants to play Nd2 and f4," explained Aronian, "but if 17.Nd2 Black will reply 17...e5 and after 18.e4 my rook is not useful on f1. So I play 17.Re1 and ask Black to find a useful move."

17...a4 18.Nd2 e5 "He must play this," said Aronian. "If he lets me play f4 his bishop will be dead for the rest of the game. For example after 18...f5 19.f4 g4 the position is blocked but really Black is effectively a piece down and White will eventually win on the kingside."

19.e4! Diagram





Left:

Aronian got off to a fast start, beating last year's sensation Caruana in front of a large crowd.

19...f5!? "I don't trust this move.," said Aronian. "I was expecting 19...exd4 when I analysed 20.exd5!? Re8 21.Qd1 Rxe1+ 22.Qxe1 Ra5 23.Nc4 Rxd5 24.Nxd6 Rxd6 25.Re2 Kf8 26.Qb4 and thought that I might still have some pressure. Then I wondered whether I have time for 20.Rcc1! when I couldn't see a good way for Black to respond."

20.f3! dxe4?!

"This must be wrong," said Aronian. "Certainly 20...exd4 21.exd5 (21.e5!?) 21...Re8 22.Qd1 Rxe1+ 23.Qxe1 Ra5 24.Nc4 Rxd5 25.Nxd6 Rxd6 26.Re2 Kf8 27.Qb4 is more difficult for Black than the previous line, because the f5-pawn gets in the way.

"However 20...Re8 21.Qf2 will

probably lead to something similar.

21.fxe4 Ra5 22.exf5! "

22.dxe5 Rxe5 23.Nf3 is probably also good but I wanted to open up against Black's king," said Aronian. "By now I had the feeling that I would win within another 10 moves."

22...Nxf5 23.Bc4+!

23.dxe5 Nd4 24.Qh5 Bf5 was not convincing enough for Aronian.

23...Kg7 24.d5! Re8? Played after only 7 seconds thought and soon regretted. "

24...Nd6! 25.Qxe5+ Qf6 was the most persistent and would have spoiled my plan of winning in 10 moves," admitted Aronian.

25.Ne4! Nd4 Diagram

"I thought that 25...Nd6 was the best defence but after 26.Nxd6 Qxd6 27.Rf1! Black lacks the single tempo he needs to finally develop his bishop," said Aronian.

26.Qh5! Nxc2 Based on a miscalculation but it is too late to go back. "I thought that 26...Bf5 was the best chance," said Aronian, "but after 27.Rf2 Bg6 28.Qh3 I would be very happy."

27.Nxg5 Bf5 Diagram

27...Nxe1 walks into the pretty finish. 28.Qxh7+ Kf6 29.Ne4#!

28.Rf1!! The point behind White's sacrifice - temporarily staying a rook down.

28.Qf7+ Kh6 29.Qxf5 Qxg5 30.Qxc2 was certainly not White's idea.

28...Qf6 "Fabiano said that after 28... Bg6 29.Rf7+ Kg8 he missed 30.Qh6!," explained Aronian, "Though I also thought that 30.d6 Bxh5 31.Rxc7+ Bf7! 32.Nxf7 might be winning." On that small point Aronian was wrong - after 32...Qh4! Black turns the tables. "Anyway," added Aronian, "you don't need a queen sacrifice when you can mate in two."



29.Ne6+ "I saw I had a million wins, but as my mother says, 'A caravan camel gets the urge to dance when he's approaching a bridge over water,'" explained Aronian.

29.Rxf5 Qxf5 30.Ne6+ Kf6 31.Qxe8 was also crushing.

29...Rxe6 30.Rxf5 Qg6 31.dxe6 Qxh5 32.Rxh5 Nd4 33.e7

"Here I saw a beautiful geometrical win," said Aronian, "though almost anything wins, for example 33.Bd3 h6 34.e7 Ra8 35.Rxe5 Re8 36.Re4 when the knight cannot go to f5."

If 36...Nf5 37.Rg4+ Kf6 38.Rf4 wins. I.R.

33...Ra8 34.Rxe5 Re8 #

35.Re4! Nf5

35...Nxc6 36.Bb5 is similarly disastrous for Black.

36.Be6! Nd6

On 36...Nxe7 37.Bd7 wins.

37.Bd7! Nxe4 38.Bxe8 Kf6 39.Bg6!

1-0

Carlsen, Magnus 2853
Topalov, Veselin 2816
 Sinquefield Cup 2015 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nd7 4.O-O Nf6 5.Re1 a6 6.Bd3 b5 7.c4!?



7...g5!

7...g5 is a very interesting move - I couldn't find a clear way to play after that," admitted Carlsen.

7...g5 was first suggested by David Smerdon in February 2014 when analysing a Carlsen-Nakamura game for Chesspublishing.com, and that article had been noted by Topalov's seconds at the time while preparing for the 2014 Candidates tournament. The only other high level game after 7.c4 had seen Nakamura play 7...Ne5 but after 8.Bf1 Nxc4 (8...Bg4 ?! 9.cxb5!) 9.a4!

White had considerable pressure for the pawn.

8.Nxg5 Ne5 9.Be2 bxc4 10.Na3

10.f4 Nd3 11.Bxd3 cxd3 gives Black good play because a forcing attempt such as 12.e5?! dxe5 13.fxe5 Qd4+ 14.Kh1 Ng4 15.Qf3 does not force Black to take a perpetual check

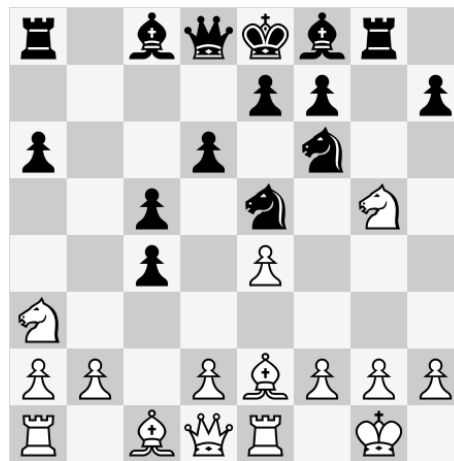


Carlsen had another tough tournament following his poor performance at Norway Chess

because 15...Rb8! 16.Qxf7+ Kd8 leaves White in trouble.

10.Nf3 was the most sober response, though Black retains compensation after 10...Nd3 11.Bxd3 cxd3 "I couldn't decide whether to go for the normal option or sacrifice a piece," admitted Carlsen, who spent almost half an hour on this move.

10...Rg8



11.Nxc4!?

A fantastic idea, prepared by a long think on the previous move. "I knew I was going to sacrifice a piece when I played 10.Na3 but I wasn't playing

very practically," said Carlsen. "I suspected that it might not be good but I thought that I wouldn't be much worse even in the worst case. I was also taking my opponent's style into account. However I should have played it quickly to have more time at critical junctures later."

Topalov was more sceptical; "It's not what White's supposed to do on move 10, be a piece down and fighting for equality."

11...Nxc4 12.d4 Nb6 13.Bh5!

13.dxc5! dxc5 14.Bh5 is a more

annoying move order but will likely transpose to the game.

13...Nxb5 14.Qxh5 Rg7 15.Nxb7



"As soon as I played this I saw that his answer would be 15...Qd7!, not threatening 16...Qg4 as I had expected but 16...Qh3 which is much stronger," explained Carlsen.

15...Qd7! The most testing continuation for White.

15...Rxb7 16.Qxb7 cxd4 is fine for Black but White retains some trumps in Black's weak king and the passed h-pawn.

16.dxc5 dxc5 17.e5?



Attempting to set up Nf6+ tricks, but Topalov handles the threats perfectly. "I needed to accept that I was not better and play more solidly," admitted Carlsen. Most humans would be very reluctant to play 17.Nxf8! allowing 17...Qh3! 18.Qxh3 Bxh3 19.g3 but, despite the semi-trapped knight, "I think I would still be perfectly fine then," said Carlsen.

17...Qc6! Missed by Carlsen.

17...Qh3? would allow a Carlsen trick via 18.Nf6+! Kd8 19.Rd1+ Kc7 20.Ne8+ while on 17...Qg4 18.Nf6+! exf6 19.exf6+ Be6 20.fxg7 Qxh5 21.g8=Q O-O-O 22.Qg5! holds the balance.

18.f3 Qg6 19.Nf6+



19...Kd8! Suddenly the queens must be exchanged, White's attack is over and he must defend a near hopeless endgame.

20.Qxg6 Rxb7 21.Ne4 Bb7 22.h4 Rc8 23.h5 Rg8 24.Bd2 Nc4 25.Bc3 Bh6 26.Rad1+ Ke8 27.Rd3 Bf4 28.Nf2 Bc6 29.Nh3 Bg3 30.Re2 Bb5 31.Rd1 Bc6



32.Nf2?! "I still should have had chances to resist but a couple of stupid blunders made it easy for him," sad Carlsen.



Nakamura won the battle against his new compatriot

32.Rd3 would at least force Toplov to find a new winning plan.

32...Bxe5! "In time trouble he let me do everything," said Toplov.

33.Ng4

33.Bxe5 Bxf3 and 33.Rxe5 Nxe5
34.Bxe5 Bxf3 are both hopeless for White

33...Bxc3 34.bxc3 Kf8 35.Kf2 With only one pawn for the piece there is little reason to play on but both players were in time trouble so

Carlsen decides to play on until the time control.

35...Rh8 36.Ne5 Nxe5 37.Rxe5 Be8 38.g4 f6 39.Re6 Bb5 40.Rde1 Rc7

0-1

So, Wesley 2779

Nakamura, Hikaru 2814

Sinquefield Cup 2015

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6

"I haven't played the King's Indian very often recently," said Nakamura. "My former coach Kasparov decided long ago that it wins for White thanks to all his brutal losses to Kramnik!"

5.Nf3 O-O 6.Be2 e5 7.O-O Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.f3!? f5



Above: Nakamura with his girlfriend Mariagrazia De Rosa
Below: Anish Giri with his wife Sopiko Guramishvili



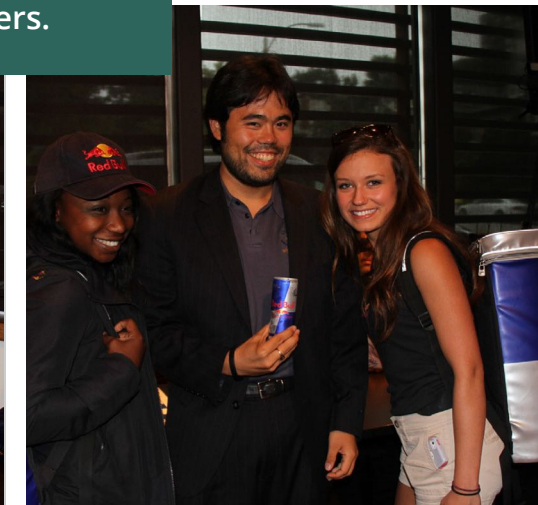


The World Chess Hall of Fame in St Louis





Autograph signing with the players.





11.Be3!? "When choosing the King's Indian I expected Wesley to go for something more calm," confessed Nakamura. It is already too late for 11.Nd3 ?! as 11...f4 leads to a superior version of the main line for Black.

However 11.g4 is more popular than Korchnoi's favourite plan with 10 or 11.Be3.

11...f4 12.Bf2 g5 13.Nd3 A small surprise for Nakamura.

13.a4 is the main line, but So had scored well in the recent past with both 13.Rc1 and 13.g4!?

13...Ng6 The original game with this line, an Averbakh v Bronstein encounter from the 1952 Soviet Championship, saw the cruder 13...Rf6 14.c5 Rh6. While dangerous, the ...Qe8-h5 plan is considered insufficient for Black and Bronstein lost the aforementioned game.

14.c5 Nf6 15.Rc1 Rf7



16.Kh1 A waiting move; Nakamura had already faced 16.a4 which also hopes Black will play ...h5. The problem for White is that the direct 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.Nb5 allows Black to play 17...g4! without ...h5, and that means that ...g3 will come with extra effect because the h5-square is available to the f6-knight.

16...h5 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.Nb5 a6 19.Na3

19.Na7! is the sort of move Korchnoi used to get away with, but here after 19...Bd7 20.Qb3 g4 Black's attack proceeds quickly.

19...b5 20.Rc6 The first new move; by now So had used only 3 minutes while Nakamura had started thinking two moves earlier.

20...g4 "If Wesley keeps playing quickly I think I will be in trouble,"

confessed Nakamura, "but if he keeps thinking I think I am going to do very well. But anyway, I am going to try to mate him!" (Nakamura will have been well pleased that So spent 7 minutes on his next move and an hour on the next four.)

21.Qc2 Qf8!? 22.Rc1 Bd7



23.Rc7? "I think that Wesley just needs to learn to prepare better. There are a lot of lines like this in the King's Indian where the computer will say something like +2, but in such a position it is very easy to go wrong," said Nakamura after the game. "In fact I didn't see much play for him after 21.Qc2 and 22.Rc1."

23.Nb4! is the critical choice after which 23...Bxc6 24.dxc6 gives White considerable play, so it is more likely that Nakamura would have gone for 23...g3!? 24.Bg1 (24.hxg3 fxg3 25.Bxg3 h4 26.Bf2 h3! gets very scary for White.)

24...gxh2 25.Bf2 when the outcome of the kingside v queenside race is still up in the air.

23...Bh6! 24.Be1 h4! 25.fxg4



25...f3! 26.gxf3 Nxe4! 27.Rd1 ?! An inconsequential move which took So 30 minutes, but it seems that nothing is sufficient any more. "I was shocked that he played this after thinking for so long.

27.Rxd7 was the only try, but after 27...Rxf3 28.Bxf3 Qxf3+ 29.Qg2 Qxd3 30.Rd1 and now the computer said 30...Bd2 !! but I had looked at 30...h3! [The same move Anand had suggested in the commentary room. IR] and I think Black wins," said Nakamura. Play could continue 31.Rxd3 hxg2+ 32.Kg1 Nc5 winning back the exchange with advantage.

27.Nb4 suggested by Vachier-Lagrave, trying to set up a skewer along the c2-g6 diagonal, is also

insufficient after 27...Rxf3! 28.Qxe4 Rf1+ 29.Kg2 h3+! 30.Kxh3 Nf4+ 31.Kg3 Rg1+ and White will soon be mated.

It should be noted that 27.fxe4 loses directly to 27...Rf1+ 28.Kg2 Be3! threatening ...h3+ and...Qh6+.

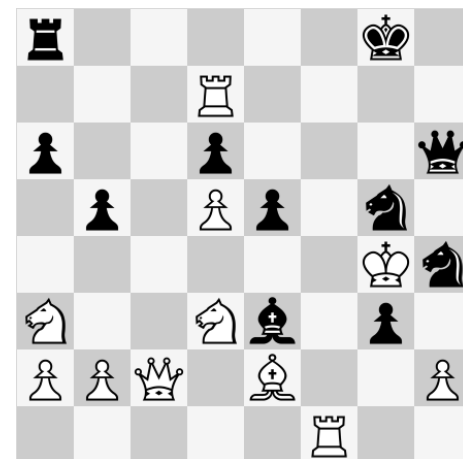
27...Rxf3 28.Rxd7 Rf1+ 29.Kg2



29...Be3! Missed by So, yet there are plenty of alternative wins, the most beautiful being 29...h3+ 30.Kxh3 Rf2 !! (Or) 30...Rg1! or 30...Rxe1! 31.Rxe1 Qf2 !! (31.Bxf2 Qxf2 !!).

"I saw some ideas like this but I couldn't make it work," admitted Nakamura, a little annoyed that he had not found this line and finished off the game with 32.Nxf2 Nf4+ 33.Kh4 Bg5#!

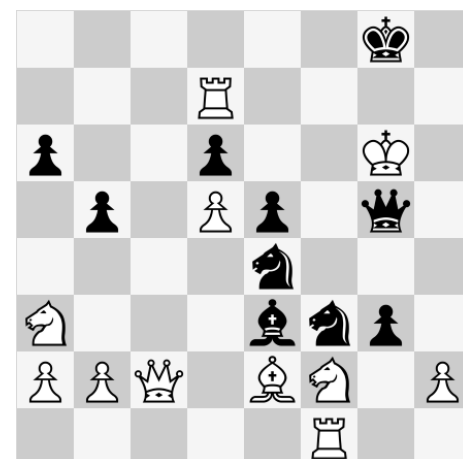
30.Bg3 hxg3! 31.Rxf1 Nh4+ 32.Kh3 Qh6! 33.g5 Nxc5+ 34.Kg4



34...Nh3!

Now the threat of 35...Qh3+ forces a quick mate, which So sportingly allows.

35.Nf2 Qh4+ 36.Kf5 Rf8+ 37.Kg6 Rf6+! 38.Kxf6 Ne4+ 39.Kg6 Qg5

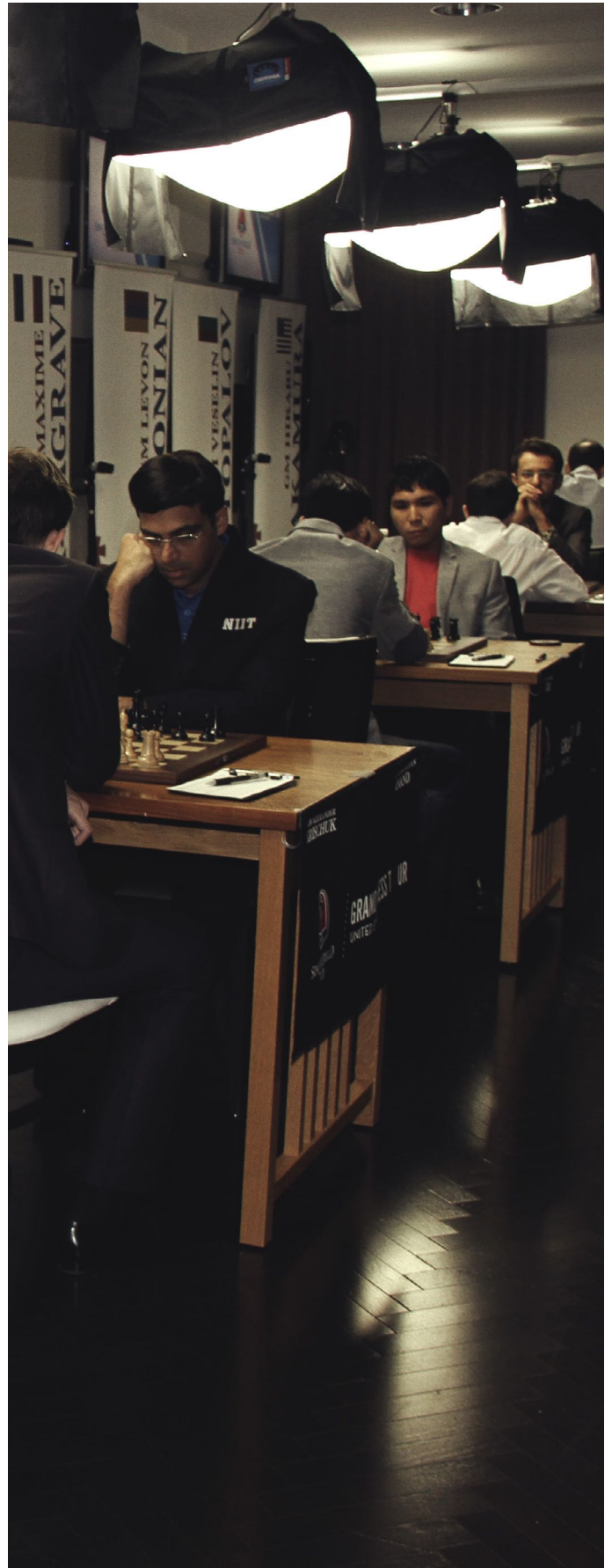


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CROWDS

Aronian, like many other players in Saint Louis, expressed his pleasure at playing in front of an enthusiastic crowd – a rarity when so many top events are held more for the internet audience than for local fans.

The autograph signing days attracted more than 300 fans with memorabilia of all kinds. Though signing autographs was not what most of the players would have preferred to be doing the day before a big tournament, it was a small price to pay for generating an atmosphere of enthusiasm and interest, an atmosphere which permeated the playing hall and the nearby commentary venues.



GRAND CHESS TOUR

At the closing press conference, Garry Kasparov admitted that the Grand Chess Tour had suffered some teething troubles in its first year.

However with two of the three Tour events held so far, it seems clear that the benefits of bringing the world elite together outweigh any technical flaws in the Tour concept.

The scoring system, especially breaking ties in favour of the player with most losses, needs some improvement . Having Topalov (first and sixth in the first two Tour events) leading the Tour standings ahead of Nakamura (two ties for second) is weird. However using a system which favours inconsistency has had the side-effect that Carlsen's chances of winning the 2015 Tour are

still alive, a boon for the London organisers and the Norwegian television broadcasters.

Plans for expansion of the Grand Tour to four or even six tournaments are on hold because the 2016 calendar is so crowded, with a Candidates tournament, Olympiad and world title match in the same year.

The 2016 Grand Tour will invite the top three finishers from the 2015 Tour plus the next six highest rated players for the 2016 tour. In 2015 only Vladimir Kramnik declined his invitation, but in a busy 2016 there is a risk of more top players sitting out the Grand Tour.

Below:

The World Chess Hall of Fame is worth a visit



PAWN SACRIFICE

At the end of the tournament a special screening of the Hollywood film *Pawn Sacrifice* was arranged at the players' hotel, the Chase Park Plaza. Guests included Garry Kasparov and the film's producer Gail Katz, who also answered questions at the end of the film.

For most of the Sinquefield Cup players Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky are merely historical figures like Capablanca and Morphy; Anand is the only one of the Sinquefield 10 who has played Spassky, and he also met Fischer in Iceland.

Rather than document the milestones of Fischer's journey to the top of world chess as the documentary *Bobby Fischer Against the World* had done, *Pawn*

Sacrifice centres around the development of Fischer's mental illness; paranoia in particular.

When asked if he liked the film or not, Garry Kasparov's short comment was "Could be worse." He explained "My main worry is if the film promotes chess or not," clearly fearing that the answer was not.

Kasparov also took issue with the screenwriters' choice of game 6 of the 1972 Fischer-Spassky match as pivotal and, according to the film "still regarded as the greatest game of all time".

"There were two great games in the 1972 match – games 10 and 13 – which could have been the climax of the film," said Kasparov.



Left:
A screenshot from the film "Pawn Sacrifice", starting Liev Schreiber as Boris Spassky and Toby Maguire as Bobby Fischer.

ULTIMATE MOVES

As soon as the tournament finished the younger players relaxed with late nights of lightning and bughouse chess, and all joined in for the organised mayhem of Ultimate Moves.

The 10 GMs were split into teams, with Yasser Seirawan and Rex Sinquefield added to one side, and Kasparov and Rex's son Randy to the other.

Tandem chess is notoriously difficult and here doubly so with so many GMs generating ideas and the certainty that everything would be ruined when Rex Sinquefield and Randy took over each side at a critical moment.

While the purists groaned, the games were entertaining and the players could be seen at their most relaxed with the Saint Louis Chess Club alive with chess clock assaults and laughter. With all the work required to become a world class player, it was great to see that the world's best GMs have not forgotten how much fun it is to just play chess.



Top left: Maurice Ashley clearly enjoyed commenting Top right: Seirawan battles Kasparov
Bottom: Even the world's best play transfer