

## NOTABLE QUOTES

“Education in Chess has to be an education in independent thinking and judging. Chess must not be memorized, simply because it is not important enough. If you load your memory, you should know why. Memory is too valuable to be stocked with trifles.”

— *Emanuel Lasker*, *Lasker’s Manual of Chess* (1925)

“I want to keep the old chess flavour. I want to keep the old chess game. But just making a change so the starting positions are mixed, so it’s not degenerated down to memorization and prearrangement like it is today.”

— *Bobby Fischer* in a radio interview (June 27, 1999)

“Fischer is a man ahead of his time and his ideas are road markings for the 21st century. Fischer’s proposal of changing the starting positions of the pieces, making more room for creativity, is the only way that the human race can retain its vitality in the face of inevitable technological progress. Like his chess clock, which is used more and more, his idea of a chess game will be accepted – whether in twenty or fifty years is immaterial.”

— *Ljubomir Ljubojević* in an interview (November 1, 1997)

“I’d love to play Chess960 against Fischer. With this variant of chess, you don’t need to spend ages preparing, because there’s no opening theory. The most important thing is to be in good shape and have a clear head. Then you can play Chess960 and beat Fischer at it! I doubt, however, that a match with Fischer will actually happen. It would probably only happen if Fischer were in desperate need of money.”

— *Anatoly Karpov* in an interview (July 20, 2005)

“I play Chess960 because it allows me to showcase my skills to their best advantage. I’ve always preferred complex games that require imagination, and Chess960 is perfect for that. I look forward all year to taking part in the Chess Classic and, of course, to defending my title as Chess960 World Champion.”

— *Peter Svidler* in an interview (July 8, 2005)

„I don’t see any disadvantages in Fischer chess. Except for the different start position, there are just advantages. That’s why I’m all for it. Our game could have been much more popular if all the chess professionals played Fischer’s version of chess.”

— *Alexander Grischuk* (March 2018)

# CHESS 960

YEARBOOK 2026

*Edited by Arno Nickel*



EDITION MARCO

BERLIN

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# Preface

Arno Nickel

Signs and wonders are taking place which, on closer look, turn out to be the logical continuation of an evolutionary – or, as we are not yet entirely sure, revolutionary – development.. FIDE has taken a shine to Freestyle Chess and, at the start of 2026, swiftly struck a deal with the private organiser from Hamburg, making it possible to hold a joint *FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship* at Weissenhaus in February. The new world champion in this discipline – formerly known as *Fischer Random Chess World Championship*, officially held for the first time in 2019 – is Magnus Carlsen.

In this second volume of the *Chess 960 Yearbook*, we take an in-depth look at the eventful developments of 2025, which – following the breakdown of relations at the start of that year – led to this turning point. With their project, launched in 2024, Jan Henric Buettner and Magnus Carlsen sparked a ‘Freestyle’ boom in chess and took the ‘chess of the future’ – as optimists call it – to a new level with a spectacular, highly prestigious *Grand Slam Tour – Weissenhaus, Paris, Karlsruhe, Las Vegas, Grootbos/Cape Town*. We follow each stage in detail, with all its ups and downs, and then discuss the outcomes that have emerged from the tension between commercial interests and requirements on the one hand, and chess-specific criteria on the other. (*‘Quo vadis, Freestyle Chess?’*)

A relevant and complementary piece consists of extracts from a conversation that *Thorsten Cmiel* had with Carlsen’s coach, *Peter Heine Nielsen*, in September 2025. We present the sections relating to Chess960 in an authorised English translation. (*‘Playing Chess Human against Human again’*)

We welcome as a new contributor the Russian Grandmaster and experienced journalist *Andrey Deviatkin* (born 1980), a long-standing advocate of Chess960 and a participant in the Grenke Freestyle Open in Karlsruhe in 2025, where we first met. Among other things, he reports on Chess960 activities in Russia, enabling us to look beyond the eurocentric horizon. (*“Classical Chess 960 – To be or not to be?”*) Furthermore, he has provided detailed commentary on *twelve selected Chess960 games* and compiled *50 puzzles* from other games, which he has also analysed in varying degrees of depth – with a focus on tactical twists.

As well as 125 ‘Chess Informant’-style games – based on in-depth *Stockfish* analyses (see the *Games section*) – the Yearbook offers an extensive collection of Chess960 analyses and covers a wide variety of different starting positions.

Once again, the Catalan author and International Master *Santiago Beltrán* provides rare insights into Chess960 opening problems from a human perspective, in contrast to *Stockfish*’s preferences. This time, the focus is not necessarily on unbalanced positions, but simply on unusual opening scenarios with tactical twists that are difficult to predict. (*‘Non-human Chess960 Openings’*)

What statistical data and insights does practical play – across its various time formats and disciplines – provide us with, compared to Stockfish's evaluations and preferences? The editor of this *Yearbook* addresses this question in a separate article, which also discusses the challenges of obtaining suitable data and adopts a pragmatic, empirical approach. (*'Stockfish and practical Play – two different Worlds in Chess 960'*)

Various documents and sources relating to the *Rules and Regulations* of top-level Chess960 tournaments supplement this second volume.

Special thanks go to the organiser, *Freestyle Chess*, for kindly granting permission to publish numerous photos from its press archive, particularly those of *Stev Bonhage* and *Lennart Ootes*.

This volume was originally intended to be published several months ago. Due to exceptional circumstances and the need to ensure the work is carried out carefully, we have unfortunately had to postpone the publication date on several occasions. We intend to include the remaining reports from 2025 and 2026 in the third volume next year.

We continue to hope for your kind support and appreciation for this publication, which was launched as a pilot project. Some readers may also be interested in the interactive eBook version of this Yearbook (based on the comprehensive PDF file). Further details can be found on our website [www.edition-marco.de](http://www.edition-marco.de).

P.S.

*Something is still missing. The original plan was actually to write an article in favour of gradually putting Chess 960 on equal terms with standard chess. Nothing entirely new<sup>1</sup>, but a highly controversial topic. – How about if standard chess and Chess 960 were played side by side in the same tournament, with players free to choose whether they wish to compete against each other using the standard 518 position or a randomly generated Chess 960 starting position? Let us assume that players who enjoy playing Chess 960 state their preference before the start of the tournament (or before the round) and that only two players with the same preference would play Chess 960 against each other if they were paired together. For all other players, everything would remain as before. They would not be obliged to play a single game of Chess 960. I think both sides would benefit from this in the long run. □*



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<sup>1</sup> See my article on ChessBase News:

<https://en.chessbase.com/post/classical-chess-fischer-random-both> (Nov. 11, 2022);

<https://de.chessbase.com/post/klassisches-schach-oder-fischer-random-schach-oder-beides> (Nov. 3, 2022)

# Furious Grand Slam Start in Weissenhaus

## Vincent Keymer unstoppable

Following the successful launch of Freestyle Chess as a spectacular global event with the G.O.A.-T. Challenge 2024, Weissenhaus once again set the tone for the Grand Slam Tour across various continents in 2025. The two-stage tournament format, featuring a rapid tournament followed by knockout matches, had proven its worth and was retained. Despite numerous changes to participant numbers and tournament formats, this structure – with the exception of the Grenke Freestyle Chess Open in Karlsruhe in 2025 and 2026 – was retained for the 2026 FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship and is set to remain in place in 2027 as well. To open up this exclusive setting a bit for the global chess community, primarily thousands of international title holders, online “play-in” tournaments were introduced in which one player from each event for one of the Grand Slam tournaments.

What could not yet be foreseen with such clarity was the continuity among the top players, despite a large number of ambitious players who competed in at least three of the five Grand Slam tournaments over the course of the year. Of these 16 grandmasters, five who had already competed in Weissenhaus in 2025 qualified for the Grand Slam Final in Grootbos, for which only eight players were admitted. Among the eight participants in the subsequent Freestyle World Championship in Weissenhaus in 2026, six had even competed in the inaugural event.

After Magnus Carlsen brilliantly cemented his status as the G.O.A.T. in 2024, the 2025 edition in Weissenhaus demonstrated that Freestyle is always capable of producing surprises, even at the highest level. Carlsen (34) neither won the rapid tournament, where he had to

### Weissenhaus · Grand Slam (1<sup>st</sup> leg) Round-robin stage, February 7–8, 2025

|    | Player                | FED   | Elo <sup>1</sup> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Total |
|----|-----------------------|-------|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-------|
| 1  | Alireza Firouzja      | (FRA) | 2760             | ▪ | 1 | 0 | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1  | 6½    |
| 2  | Javokhir Sindarov     | (UZB) | 2668             | 0 | ▪ | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1  | 6½    |
| 3  | Fabiano Caruana       | (USA) | 2803             | 1 | ½ | ▪ | 1 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1  | 6     |
| 4  | Magnus Carlsen        | (NOR) | 2833             | ½ | 0 | 0 | ▪ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 5½    |
| 5  | Hikaru Nakamura       | (USA) | 2802             | ½ | ½ | 1 | 0 | ▪ | 1 | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½  | 5½    |
| 6  | Vincent Keymer        | (GER) | 2649             | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | 0 | ▪ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1  | 4     |
| 7  | Nodirbek Abdusattorov | (UZB) | 2766             | ½ | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | 0 | ▪ | ½ | 1 | ½  | 3½    |
| 8  | Gukesh Dommaraju      | (IND) | 2777             | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ▪ | ½ | ½  | 3½    |
| 9  | Vladimir Fedoseev     | (SLO) | 2738             | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | ▪ | 1  | 2½    |
| 10 | Levon Aronian         | (USA) | 2745             | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ▪  | 1½    |

1 FIDE Rapid Rating from February 2025.

concede first place to Alireza Firouzja (21), followed by Javokhir Sindarov (19) and Fabiano Caruana (32), nor did he prevail against his perennial title rival Caruana in the semifinals. But in the end, it wasn't the American with Italian roots who stood on the top step of the podium, but rather the 20-year-old German Vincent Keymer, whose reputation as the best German chess player since Robert Hübner is now beyond doubt. It was the way Keymer asserted himself in this illustrious circle with deep strategic understanding



**'Local Hero' Vincent Keymer**  
(Photo: Lennart Ootes/Freestyle Chess)

and precise endgame play that earned him recognition even from his defeated rivals. After Keymer had finished in seventh place the previous year, though he did impress by taking second place in the rapid tournament, his latest performance had been eagerly anticipated. Yet very few would have dared to believe in such a triumph.

Overall, the rise of younger players dominated the scene even more than in the previous year. In 2024, Nordibek Abdusattorov had won the Rapid Tournament. Although the now 20-year-old was unable to repeat that feat, his sixth-place finish following his match loss to Hikaru Nakamura (37) can hardly be considered disappointing, nor can the eighth-place finish of the reigning 18-year-old world champion Gukesh Dommaraju. For the tournament's oldest participant, Levon Aronian (42), the match victory against Vladimir Fedoseev (29) was a small consolation after he had finished last without a single win in the rapid tournament. One might argue here whether it was not somewhat excessive to exclude the two last-place finishers of the rapid tournament from the knockout matches

#### QUARTERFINALS

|                                          |         |
|------------------------------------------|---------|
| (1 vs 6) <b>Firouzja</b> – <b>Keymer</b> | ½ : 1½  |
| (2 vs 5) <b>Sindarov</b> – Nakamura      | 2½ : 1½ |
| (3 vs 8) <b>Caruana</b> – Gukesh         | 2 : 0   |
| (4 vs 7) <b>Carlsen</b> – Abdusattorov   | 2 : 0   |

#### SEMIFINALS

|                           |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| <b>Keymer</b> – Carlsen   | 1½ : ½ |
| <b>Caruana</b> – Sindarov | 4 : 3  |

#### FINALS

|                               |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| 1-2 <b>Keymer</b> – Caruana   | 1½ : ½ |
| 3-4 <b>Carlsen</b> – Sindarov | 2 : 0  |

#### 5<sup>TH</sup> & 7<sup>TH</sup> PLACE

|                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Abdusattorov</b> – Firouzja     | 1½ : ½  |
| <b>Nakamura</b> – Gukesh           | 2½ : 1½ |
| 5-6 <b>Nakamura</b> – Abdusattorov | 2 : 0   |
| 7-8 <b>Firouzja</b> – Gukesh       | 1½ : ½  |

#### 9<sup>TH</sup> PLACE

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| 9-10 <b>Aronian</b> – Fedoseev | 1½ : ½ |
|--------------------------------|--------|



# Paris

## Magnus strikes back

Three weeks after the opening event in Weissenhaus and four weeks before the next leg of the Grand Slam in Paris, the organisers were delighted with what had been achieved and full of optimism. Looking back on developments since 2024, they said:

“The reach of this event has been incredible – almost three times as much as last year! On top of that, the Community Stream was a tremendous success, showing how powerful this format can be in making chess more accessible. It’s amazing to see the growing passion for Freestyle and the energy of the community behind it,” says Freestyle COO Thomas Harsch about the kickoff event. (...) Now, the excitement carries over to Paris (...).”

Once again, with an ambiance that is in no way inferior to that of the Weissenhaus Private Nature Luxury Resort: “The tournament will unfold at the Pavillon Chesnaie du Roy in Paris, nestled in the historic Bois de Vincennes. This will be the first Freestyle Chess Grand Slam to feature 12 participants.” (Press release by Freestyle Chess, March 7, 2025)

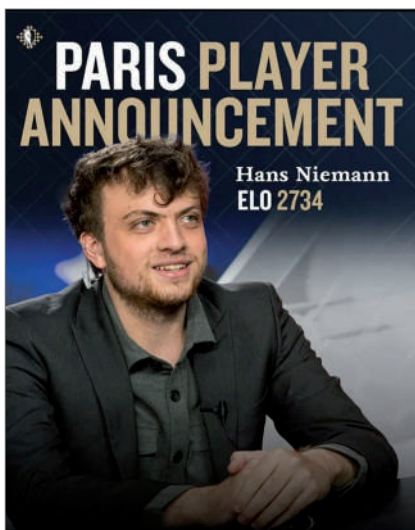
However, two unexpected withdrawals by high-profile players caused the organisers quite a headache shortly before the tournament began. Of all people, France’s super-talent Alireza Firouzja decided not to take part for personal reasons that were not entirely clear. Even his negotiating partner, Jan Henric Buettner, was at a loss as to why the detailed contract negotiations ultimately fell through at the last minute. However, he found a worthy replacement in the Hungarian grandmaster Richard Rapport, who had finished second in the online qualifying tournament, a player known for his combative and creative style of play.

### Paris ▷ Grand Slam (2<sup>nd</sup> leg) Round-robin stage, April 7–8, 2025

|    | Player             | FED    | Elo <sup>1</sup> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Total |
|----|--------------------|--------|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-------|
| 1  | Ian Nepomniachtchi | (FIDE) | 2758             | ▪ | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | 0 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 8½    |
| 2  | Magnus Carlsen     | (NOR)  | 2818             | ½ | ▪ | ½ | 0 | 1 | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 8½    |
| 3  | M. Vachier-Lagrave | (FRA)  | 2745             | 0 | ½ | ▪ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1  | ½  | 1  | 7     |
| 4  | Arjun Erigaisi     | (IND)  | 2708             | 0 | 1 | ½ | ▪ | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½  | 0  | 1  | 6½    |
| 5  | N. Abdusattorov    | (UZB)  | 2732             | ½ | 0 | ½ | 0 | ▪ | ½ | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 6½    |
| 6  | Hikaru Nakamura    | (USA)  | 2733             | 0 | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ | ▪ | 0 | ½ | ½ | 1  | 1  | 1  | 6     |
| 7  | Vincent Keymer     | (GER)  | 2649             | 0 | ½ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | ▪ | 1 | 1 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 5½    |
| 8  | Fabiano Caruana    | (USA)  | 2756             | ½ | 0 | ½ | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | ▪ | 1 | 1  | 1  | 0  | 4½    |
| 9  | Praggnanandhaa R   | (IND)  | 2684             | 1 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ | 0 | 0 | ▪ | 0  | 0  | 1  | 4     |
| 10 | Richard Rapport    | (HUN)  | 2709             | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | ▪  | 1  | 1  | 3½    |
| 11 | Gukesh Dommaraju   | (IND)  | 2654             | 0 | 0 | ½ | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0  | ▪  | 0  | 3½    |
| 12 | Vidit Gujrathi     | (IND)  | 2650             | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 1  | ▪  | 2     |

1 FIDE Rapid Rating from April 2025.





**Hans Niemann – A mysterious withdrawal following an initially enthusiastic acceptance**  
(Picture: Freestyle Chess)



**‘Alireza Firouzja – Unexpected withdrawal after complicated contract negotiations**  
(Photo: Lennart Ootes/Freestyle Chess)

The second withdrawal followed shortly afterwards from Hans Moke Niemann, with Nordibek Abdusattorov stepping in to replace him two days before the tournament began. Personal reasons were cited here too, although there was speculation as to whether the organiser’s announcement that it would be implementing stricter electronic security measures to combat attempts at fraud had influenced his decision.

The sudden withdrawal at the last minute garnered controversy. Fans had been eagerly awaiting his anticipated meeting with Magnus Carlsen in the event, due to their controversial rivalry. He had previously stated that he was „deeply grateful“ for the invitation, and would bring former world champion Vladimir Kramnik with him as his second in Paris.

Unlike Firouzja, who did not take part in any further Grand Slam tournaments after the first two events in Weissenhaus, Niemann competed in all subsequent events following Paris.

The focus of the tournament was on whether Magnus Carlsen could live up to his role as favourite this time and whether Vincent Keymer could build on his victory in Weissenhaus. With the field expanded to 12 players, six new faces brought a breath of fresh air, meaning that a repeat of the Weissenhaus tournament was never on the cards. How would the ‘new-comers’ fare? And would the ‘youngsters’ once again steal the show from the ‘old guard’?

The Rapid Tournament provided some answers to this question as early as the first two days, some of which were rather bizarre, with the tough knockout format – the bottom four were eliminated from the main event – possibly acting as a catalyst. Carlsen and Abdusattorov got off to the best start with 5 out of 6 on the first day, in contrast to Keymer, who could not manage more than 2 points. Nevertheless, on the second day, the young German managed to secure his place in the main round with 3.5 points from 5. Ian Nepomniachtchi was in brilliant form, scoring 4.5 points from 5, and ultimately shared first place with

## Final Standings Grenke Freestyle Chess Open-A 2025 - Top Scorers

| Player                         | Rating | Round 1  | Round 2  | Round 3  | Round 4  | Round 5  | Round 6  | Round 7  | Round 8  | Round 9  | Total | BH  |
|--------------------------------|--------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|-----|
| 1 Magnus Carlsen (NOR)         | 2837   | 1 (♟256) | 1 (84)   | 1 (♾22)  | 1 (32)   | 1 (♟38)  | 1 (80)   | 1 (♾2)   | 1 (9)    | 1 (♟13)  | 9     | 52½ |
| 2 Parham Maghsoodloo (IRN)     | 2684   | 1 (♾233) | ½ (223)  | 1 (♾288) | 1 (48)   | 1 (♾47)  | 1 (10)   | 0 (1)    | 1 (♾27)  | ½ (5)    | 7     | 52½ |
| 3 Andrey Esipenko (FIDE)       | 2696   | 1 (♾141) | 1 (74)   | ½ (♾48)  | ½ (56)   | 1 (♾69)  | 1 (38)   | 1 (♾11)  | 0 (13)   | 1 (♾28)  | 7     | 52  |
| Frederik Svane (GER)           | 2668   | 1 (♾145) | 1 (43)   | ½ (♾52)  | 1 (49)   | 0 (♾28)  | 1 (86)   | 1 (♾64)  | 1 (12)   | ½ (♾20)  | 7     | 52  |
| 5 Leinier Dominguez P. (USA)   | 2738   | 1 (♾293) | 1 (189)  | ½ (♾39)  | ½ (40)   | 1 (♾63)  | ½ (18)   | 1 (♾56)  | 1 (30)   | ½ (♾2)   | 7     | 50½ |
| Alexey Sarana (SRB)            | 2672   | 1 (231)  | 1 (♾78)  | 1 (187)  | 1 (♾55)  | ½ (10)   | ½ (♾25)  | ½ (27)   | ½ (♾8)   | 1 (44)   | 7     | 50½ |
| 7 Erigaisi Arjun (IND)         | 2782   | 1 (123)  | ½ (♾35)  | 1 (81)   | 0 (♾31)  | 1 (87)   | ½ (♾89)  | 1 (60)   | 1 (♾17)  | 1 (36)   | 7     | 50  |
| Fabiano Caruana (USA)          | 2776   | 1 (♾292) | 1 (50)   | 0 (♾32)  | 1 (117)  | 1 (♾186) | 1 (24)   | ½ (♾28)  | ½ (6)    | 1 (♾37)  | 7     | 50  |
| 9 Rauf Mamedov (AZE)           | 2657   | 1 (102)  | 1 (♾72)  | 1 (58)   | ½ (♾41)  | ½ (16)   | 1 (♾35)  | 1 (25)   | 0 (♾1)   | ½ (15)   | 6½    | 56  |
| 10 Leon Luke Mendonca (IND)    | 2643   | 1 (♾201) | 1 (90)   | 1 (♾26)  | 1 (15)   | ½ (♾6)   | 0 (♾2)   | ½ (14)   | 1 (♾35)  | ½ (19)   | 6½    | 54  |
| 11 Pranesh M (IND)             | 2572   | 1 (♾180) | 1 (122)  | 1 (♾20)  | ½ (12)   | ½ (♾37)  | 1 (♾23)  | 0 (3)    | 1 (♾80)  | ½ (16)   | 6½    | 53  |
| 12 Javokhir Sindarov (UZB)     | 2706   | 1 (93)   | 1 (♾155) | 1 (42)   | ½ (♾11)  | 0 (25)   | 1 (♾58)  | 1 (31)   | 0 (♾4)   | 1 (55)   | 6½    | 52½ |
| 13 Vincent Keymer (GER)        | 2718   | 1 (172)  | ½ (♾81)  | 1 (115)  | 1 (♾118) | ½ (18)   | ½ (♾31)  | 1 (114)  | 1 (♾3)   | 0 (1)    | 6½    | 52  |
| 14 Wesley So (USA)             | 2748   | 1 (♾208) | 1 (63)   | 0 (♾47)  | ½ (43)   | 1 (♾65)  | 1 (49)   | ½ (♾10)  | ½ (40)   | 1 (♾56)  | 6½    | 50½ |
| Richard Rapport (HUN)          | 2722   | 1 (108)  | 1 (♾120) | 1 (114)  | 0 (♾10)  | ½ (55)   | 1 (♾84)  | ½ (♾18)  | 1 (53)   | ½ (♾9)   | 6½    | 50½ |
| 16 Yangyi Yu (CHN)             | 2714   | 1 (♾232) | 1 (69)   | 1 (♾186) | ½ (47)   | ½ (♾9)   | ½ (39)   | ½ (♾40)  | 1 (42)   | ½ (♾11)  | 6½    | 50  |
| David Anton Guijarro (ESP)     | 2639   | 1 (♾204) | 1 (73)   | ½ (♾33)  | ½ (82)   | 1 (♾88)  | ½ (26)   | 1 (♾34)  | 0 (7)    | 1 (♾63)  | 6½    | 50  |
| 18 Rasmus Svane (GER)          | 2625   | 1 (♾212) | 1 (277)  | ½ (♾34)  | 1 (151)  | ½ (♾13)  | ½ (♾5)   | ½ (15)   | ½ (26)   | 1 (♾67)  | 6½    | 49½ |
| 19 Max. Vachier-Lagrave (FRA)  | 2722   | 1 (♾128) | 0 (41)   | 1 (♾123) | 1 (135)  | ½ (♾57)  | 1 (62)   | 1 (♾39)  | ½ (37)   | ½ (♾10)  | 6½    | 49  |
| 19 Ray Robson (USA)            | 2692   | 1 (129)  | 1 (♾230) | 0 (11)   | 1 (♾116) | ½ (187)  | ½ (♾60)  | 1 (81)   | 1 (♾25)  | ½ (4)    | 6½    | 49  |
| Alexander Grischuk (FIDE)      | 2682   | 1 (143)  | 1 (♾153) | 0 (55)   | 1 (♾72)  | ½ (84)   | ½ (♾45)  | 1 (155)  | 1 (♾51)  | ½ (23)   | 6½    | 49  |
| 22 Nils Grandelius (SWE)       | 2640   | 1 (291)  | 1 (♾257) | 0 (1)    | 1 (♾90)  | 0 (35)   | 1 (♾92)  | 1 (103)  | ½ (♾43)  | 1 (58)   | 6½    | 48½ |
| 23 Grigoriy Oparin (USA)       | 2660   | 1 (♾182) | 1 (107)  | 0 (♾38)  | 1 (166)  | 1 (♾159) | 0 (11)   | 1 (♾117) | 1 (61)   | ½ (♾21)  | 6½    | 48  |
| 24 Murali Karthikeyan (IND)    | 2651   | 1 (♾196) | 1 (175)  | 0 (♾41)  | 1 (77)   | 1 (♾152) | 0 (88)   | 1 (153)  | 1 (38)   | ½ (♾26)  | 6½    | 47½ |
| 25 Paulius Pultinevicius (LTU) | 2558   | 1 (op)   | ½ (op)   | 1 (op)   | 1 (op)   | 1 (♾12)  | ½ (6)    | 0 (♾9)   | 0 (20)   | 1 (♾88)  | 6     | 55½ |
| 26 Ian Nepomniachtchi (FIDE)   | 2757   | 1 (79)   | 1 (♾60)  | 0 (10)   | 1 (♾153) | 1 (41)   | ½ (♾17)  | ½ (46)   | ½ (♾18)  | ½ (24)   | 6     | 54  |
| 27 Matthias Blißbaum (GER)     | 2662   | 1 (♾148) | 1 (98)   | ½ (♾49)  | 1 (52)   | 1 (♾29)  | ½ (28)   | ½ (♾6)   | 0 (2)    | ½ (♾50)  | 6     | 53½ |
| Baador Jobava (GEO)            | 2600   | 1 (138)  | ½ (♾85)  | 1 (94)   | 1 (♾44)  | 1 (4)    | ½ (♾27)  | ½ (8)    | ½ (♾36)  | 0 (3)    | 6     | 53½ |
| 29 Josefine Heinemann (GER)    | 2342   | 1 (op)   | ½ (op)   | 1 (op)   | 1 (op)   | 0 (27)   | ½ (♾42)  | ½ (89)   | 1 (♾118) | ½ (31)   | 6     | 52½ |
| 30 David Navara (CZE)          | 2665   | 1 (162)  | 1 (♾76)  | ½ (51)   | ½ (♾35)  | ½ (58)   | 1 (♾41)  | 1 (55)   | 0 (♾5)   | ½ (45)   | 6     | 51½ |
| Aryan Chopra (IND)             | 2620   | 1 (♾65)  | ½ (82)   | 1 (♾190) | 1 (7)    | ½ (♾34)  | ½ (13)   | 0 (♾12)  | 1 (57)   | ½ (♾29)  | 6     | 51½ |
| 32 Etienne Bacrot (FRA)        | 2633   | 1 (234)  | 1 (♾140) | 1 (8)    | 0 (♾1)   | ½ (60)   | ½ (♾81)  | 0 (43)   | 1 (♾92)  | 1 (♾95)  | 6     | 51  |
| 33 Levon Aronian (USA)         | 2747   | 1 (169)  | 1 (♾124) | ½ (17)   | ½ (♾39)  | ½ (42)   | ½ (♾51)  | ½ (45)   | 1 (♾71)  | ½ (40)   | 6     | 50½ |
| Hans Moke Niemann (USA)        | 2736   | 1 (142)  | 1 (♾71)  | ½ (18)   | 1 (♾51)  | ½ (31)   | ½ (♾114) | 0 (17)   | 1 (♾120) | ½ (48)   | 6     | 50½ |
| Cem Kaan Gokerkan (TUR)        | 2489   | 1 (♾216) | ½ (7)    | 1 (♾284) | ½ (30)   | 1 (♾22)  | 0 (9)    | 1 (♾65)  | 0 (10)   | 1 (♾83)  | 6     | 50½ |
| 36 Jorden Van Forest (NED)     | 2681   | 1 (♾147) | 1 (117)  | 1 (♾61)  | 0 (38)   | 1 (♾134) | ½ (56)   | 1 (♾48)  | ½ (28)   | 0 (♾7)   | 6     | 50  |
| Amin Tabatabaei (IRI)          | 2661   | 1 (127)  | 1 (♾116) | ½ (118)  | 1 (♾223) | ½ (11)   | ½ (♾53)  | 1 (67)   | ½ (♾19)  | 0 (8)    | 6     | 50  |
| Victor Mikhalevski (ISR)       | 2513   | 1 (224)  | 1 (♾222) | 1 (23)   | 1 (♾36)  | 0 (1)    | 0 (♾3)   | 1 (164)  | 0 (♾24)  | 1 (97)   | 6     | 50  |
| 39 Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus (TUR)   | 2618   | 1 (253)  | 1 (♾125) | ½ (5)    | ½ (33)   | 1 (♾82)  | ½ (♾16)  | 0 (19)   | 1 (♾115) | ½ (43)   | 6     | 49½ |
| Gata Kamsky (USA)              | 2603   | 1 (228)  | 1 (♾238) | ½ (44)   | ½ (♾5)   | ½ (45)   | 1 (♾115) | ½ (16)   | ½ (♾14)  | ½ (♾33)  | 6     | 49½ |
| Juraj Druska (SVK)             | 2442   | 1 (220)  | 1 (♾19)  | 1 (24)   | ½ (9)    | 0 (♾26)  | 0 (30)   | 1 (♾137) | ½ (♾59)  | 1 (91)   | 6     | 49½ |
| 42 Kacper Piorun (POL)         | 2577   | 1 (♾113) | 1 (137)  | 0 (♾12)  | 1 (277)  | ½ (♾33)  | ½ (29)   | 1 (♾82)  | 0 (♾16)  | 1 (85)   | 6     | 49  |
| Jonas Hacker (GER)             | 2370   | 1 (154)  | 0 (♾4)   | 1 (224)  | ½ (♾14)  | 1 (127)  | ½ (♾68)  | 1 (♾32)  | ½ (22)   | ½ (♾39)  | 6     | 49  |
| 44 Quang Liem Le (VIE)         | 2729   | 1 (♾171) | 1 (86)   | ½ (♾40)  | 0 (28)   | 1 (♾190) | ½ (50)   | 1 (♾69)  | 1 (68)   | 0 (♾6)   | 6     | 48½ |
| 45 Tobias Kölle (GER)          | 2459   | 1 (♾163) | ½ (289)  | ½ (♾64)  | 1 (122)  | ½ (♾40)  | ½ (21)   | ½ (♾33)  | 1 (125)  | ½ (♾30)  | 6     | 48  |
| 46 Daniel Dardha (EL)          | 2650   | 1 (178)  | ½ (♾94)  | 1 (85)   | 1 (♾121) | 0 (80)   | 1 (♾57)  | ½ (♾26)  | ½ (50)   | ½ (♾49)  | 6     | 47½ |
| Dmitrij Kollars (GER)          | 2623   | 1 (248)  | 1 (♾194) | 1 (14)   | ½ (♾16)  | 0 (2)    | 0 (♾67)  | ½ (94)   | 1 (♾160) | 1 (81)   | 6     | 47½ |
| Francesco Sonis (ITA)          | 2576   | 1 (296)  | 1 (♾105) | ½ (3)    | 0 (♾2)   | 1 (125)  | 1 (♾151) | 0 (36)   | 1 (♾116) | ½ (♾34)  | 6     | 47½ |
| Casper Schoppen (NED)          | 2529   | 1 (150)  | 1 (♾193) | ½ (27)   | 0 (♾4)   | 1 (144)  | 0 (♾14)  | 1 (151)  | 1 (♾70)  | ½ (46)   | 6     | 47½ |
| Bibisara Assaubayeva (KAZ)     | 2494   | 1 (149)  | 0 (♾8)   | ½ (142)  | 1 (♾158) | 1 (126)  | ½ (♾44)  | 1 (83)   | ½ (♾46)  | ½ (27)   | 6     | 47½ |
| 51 Denis Kadric (MNE)          | 2533   | 1 (♾179) | 1 (133)  | ½ (♾30)  | 0 (34)   | 1 (♾197) | ½ (33)   | 1 (♾88)  | 0 (21)   | 1 (♾96)  | 6     | 47  |
| 52 Leon Livić (CRO)            | 2536   | 1 (211)  | 1 (♾225) | ½ (4)    | 0 (♾27)  | 1 (121)  | ½ (♾59)  | ½ (70)   | ½ (♾85)  | 1 (93)   | 6     | 45  |
| 53 Daniel Fridman (GER)        | 2582   | 1 (♾273) | ½ (151)  | ½ (♾99)  | 1 (257)  | 1 (♾119) | ½ (37)   | ½ (♾80)  | 0 (♾15)  | 1 (90)   | 6     | 42½ |
| 54 Dennis Wagner (GER)         | 2607   | 1 (♾202) | ½ (190)  | 0 (♾82)  | 1 (284)  | 0 (♾151) | 1 (256)  | ½ (90)   | 1 (♾105) | 1 (♾107) | 6     | 38½ |

BH = For tiebreaks, the Buchholz system was used.

The symbol ♾ in the brackets shows that the player had White against the opponent, whose final rank is numbered.

If a player switched from the Grenke Open to the Freestyle Open, points carried over are denoted as „(op)“.

Source: <https://s2.chess-results.com/tnr1160039.aspx?lan=1&art=4&flag=30&SNode=S0&tno=1160039&zeilen=99999>

“Following his outstanding performance, Carlsen acknowledged that he only faced one player rated above 2700 – Keymer in the final round. However, he did face five players rated between 2600 and 2700. Reflecting on the result, Carlsen stated: This is the kind of thing that I aim for these days. I’m not gonna be able to do that again, that’s for sure!”<sup>2</sup>

As far as the Grand Slam standings are concerned, Carlsen has, realistically speaking, established a lead that is now virtually unassailable thanks to his two tournament victories in Paris and Karlsruhe, whilst the early frontrunner, Vincent Keymer, has lost a great deal of ground following his defeat in the final round. A draw against Carlsen would have secured him second place on the best tiebreak score and an additional 18 Grand Slam points. As it stands, however, Caruana has overtaken him, even though he only managed to gain 6 Grand Slam points.

#### Grand Slam standings after 3rd leg in Karlsruhe

|    |                             |    |
|----|-----------------------------|----|
| 1  | Magnus Carlsen (NOR)        | 65 |
| 2  | Fabiano Caruana (USA)       | 39 |
| 3  | Vincent Keymer (GER)        | 37 |
| 4  | Hikaru Nakamura (USA)       | 28 |
| 5  | Parham Maghsoodloo (IRI)    | 18 |
| 6  | Arjun Erigaisi (IND)        | 16 |
| 7  | Andrey Esipenko (FIDE)      | 15 |
|    | Frederik Svane (GER)        | 15 |
| 9  | Nodirbek Abdusattorov (UZB) | 12 |
|    | Javokhir Sindarov (UZB)     | 12 |
| 11 | Leinier Dominezh (USA)      | 10 |
|    | Alexey Sarana (SRB)         | 10 |



Spectators watch the final round's matches on stage with bated breath.

Carlsen and Keymer are the centre of attention on the screen.

(Photo: Dariusz Gorzinski)

However, to ensure the title race remains exciting right until the end, the *Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour Official Rules and Regulations*, published on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2025<sup>3</sup>, stipulated in section 6.2 that twice as many points per placing would be awarded in the final Grand Slam tournament at the end of the year, i.e. 50 instead of 25 for first place, 36 instead of 18 for second place, and so on. Despite some subsequent changes to the rules, particularly regarding the tournament

format and time controls, and despite the reduction in the number of tournaments from six to five, Rule 6.2 was retained. Even a G.O.A.T. named Magnus Carlsen could not, therefore, afford to suffer a defeat in the final tournament.

2 <https://en.chessbase.com/post/grenke-freestyle-open-2025-r9>; report by Carlos Alberto Colodro, April 22, 2025

3 [https://www.freestyle-chess.com/wp-content/uploads/Freestyle-Chess-Grand-Slam-Tour-Official-RR\\_02-2025.pdf](https://www.freestyle-chess.com/wp-content/uploads/Freestyle-Chess-Grand-Slam-Tour-Official-RR_02-2025.pdf) – This is a revised and updated version of the one from January 2025.

# Las Vegas

## Amazing Victory by Levon Aronian

**A**lthough New York, the originally planned venue, didn't work out, Jan Henric Buettner and his team still managed to put together something spectacular in the USA. Las Vegas, with its unique flair for entertainment and boundless gaming, was to be swept up in chess fever, and Freestyle Chess, in an entertaining format packed with non-stop action, was set to prove that this was possible. Chess stars alone were not enough for this, despite an impressive number of US greats; instead, enthusiastic professional basketball players, led by Derrick Rose, were effectively hired as chess ambassadors and demonstrated their passion for chess and their skills publicly on the 64 squares three days before the actual event. A successful PR coup with credible exposure in the mass media.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025, Freestyle Chess announced to the press:

The event, hosted at Wynn Las Vegas, will kick off with “Chesstival” on July 13, featuring current and former NBA players in a knockout-style chess tournament. Thanks to a partnership with Chess.com, \$50,000 in total prize money will be donated to the charity of the winners' choice. The Grand Slam Tournament will follow from July 16 through July 20.

*“Wynn Las Vegas offers an unparalleled stage to introduce Freestyle’s high-energy, immersive format to the U.S. – not just as a game of strategy, but as a world-class spectator experience,”* said Jan Henric Buettner, CEO and co-founder of Freestyle Chess.

For the first time, chess fans can experience Freestyle Chess live, as the 2025 Grand Slam Tournament opens ticket sales to the public. Hosted in Wynn’s 50,000-square-foot Lafite Ballroom, the event will bring the tour’s dynamic energy to life with immersive production, live commentary, and storytelling. Fans can choose from three ticket tiers: general admission, VIP, and private booths with player meet-and-greets – designed to offer a world-class experience. Tickets start at \$90 (...)

*“I really believe Chesstival is one of the biggest paradigm shifts, along with Freestyle Chess, that the chess world has ever seen, and I think they’re going to help grow the game,”* said former NBA MVP and investor in Freestyle Chess, Derrick Rose.

The event follows Freestyle Chess raising \$20 million in funding from venture capital firms such as Left Lane Capital, as well as athletes like Derrick Rose to support the expansion of its operations and global footprint. The league features top-ranked players such as five-time World Chess Champion Magnus Carlsen, reigning World Chess Champion Gukesh Dommaraju, and former World Rapid Champion Hikaru Nakamura.<sup>1</sup>

1 Quoted from: <https://www.freestyle-chess.com/news/Freestyle-chess-grand-slam-tour-will-make-its-u-s-debut-at-wynn-las-vegas/>





**Underwater handshake between Niemann and Caruana**

(Photos: Stev Bonhage / Freestyle Chess)

In the final, Hans Niemann prevailed over Fabiano Caruana, while Javkhir Sindarov won the third-place match against Vidit Gujarathi. After claiming the title, Niemann celebrated with local fans before taking on a new challenge: an exhibition match against the reigning Underwater Chess World Champion, Michal Mazurkiewicz. Despite an early blunder that cost him a bishop in exchange for a rook and a pawn, Niemann was able to defeat the underwater specialist thanks to his superior chess prowess at the board.

While four Grandmasters were making waves in the pool, Magnus Carlsen, Levon Aronian, Vincent Keymer, and Peter Leko held a simultaneous exhibition at the University of the Western Cape for an audience of around 200 fans and members of local chess clubs. Carlsen and Aronian teamed up for a „tandem simultaneous exhibition,“ taking turns making moves across 20 different boards. The duo won 15 games, drew one, and suffered four defeats. Meanwhile, Vincent Keymer and his coach, Peter Leko, remained undefeated against their opponents, recording 18 wins and two draws.



**Carlsen and Aronian giving a ‘tandem simul’**

(Photos: Lennart Ootes / Freestyle Chess)

**FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2026****Round-robin stage, February 13, 2026**

|   | Player                | Federation | Elo* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Total |
|---|-----------------------|------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| 1 | Magnus Carlsen        | (NOR)      | 2832 | ▪ | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4½    |
| 2 | Vincent Keymer        | (GER)      | 2627 | ½ | ▪ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4     |
| 3 | Fabiano Caruana       | (USA)      | 2727 | 0 | 0 | ▪ | 1 | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | 4     |
| 4 | Nodirbek Abdusattorov | (UZB)      | 2703 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ▪ | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4     |
| 5 | Hans Moke Niemann     | (USA)      | 2646 | ½ | 0 | 0 | 1 | ▪ | 1 | ½ | ½ | 3½    |
| 6 | Arjun Erigaisi        | (IND)      | 2741 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ▪ | 1 | 0 | 3     |
| 7 | Javokhir Sindarov     | (UZB)      | 2727 | 0 | 1 | ½ | 0 | ½ | 0 | ▪ | 1 | 3     |
| 8 | Levon Aronian         | (USA)      | 2731 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | 1 | 0 | ▪ | 2     |

\* FIDE Rapid Rating 02/2026.

The round-robin rapid tournament was as thrilling as could be, for apart from two players who had already mathematically secured their places in the semifinals before the seventh and final round, four players still had hopes of progressing. The final standings reveal who these players were: apart from the frontrunners, the players in third to sixth place all still had a chance of qualifying.

With three wins and two draws after five rounds, **Carlsen** was clearly in the lead and had all but secured his place in the next round. In the first round, he had put **Niemann** under heavy pressure, but Niemann defended tenaciously and successfully – a draw! In the following round, **Sindarov** also put in a strong performance against Carlsen, but in the rook endgame on move 49 he overlooked a hidden checkmate, which cost him the game at a time when a draw was within reach.

Another player who got off to a good start was **Caruana**: he won his first two games against **Abdusattorov** and **Niemann**, then drew twice, before eventually losing to **Carlsen** and **Keymer**.

**Aronian** had a disastrous day, which he described as a ‘day of blunders’. He clearly lacked the necessary match practice following his triumphs in Las Vegas and Grootbos. As a result, he squandered a winning position against **Sindarov** in the very first round, and suffered a similar mishap against **Carlsen** in the third round.

Judging by his results, **Erigaisi** had evidently set himself the goal of not drawing a single game. He succeeded in this, but seemingly at the expense of his qualification. He was the only player not only to defeat **Carlsen**, but to thoroughly dismantle him in the sixth round. Peter Doggers wrote in his dail report: “It was one of the few games where the engine showed an evaluation ‘better for White’ from start to finish, and the eval bar just went up and up. Very impressive.”<sup>4</sup>

4 <https://www.freestyle-chess.com/news/carlsen-keymer-caruana-abdusattorov-contenders-for-world-title/>

**Keymer** qualified early in the sixth round with a fine victory over **Caruana**. “There was a brief moment where the latter missed a draw, but otherwise, Keymer was fully in control.” (P. Doggers)

„A wounded Caruana now had to face Carlsen-killer Arjun in the final round, who was also still in contention. As it turned out, both players absolutely needed to win this game to make it into the top four, and it was the highly experienced American grandmaster who pulled it off. This time, Arjun was on the wrong side of a one-sided game; he never got a chance after some early mistakes in the opening.“ (P. Doggers)

**Abdusattorov** had to face **Carlsen** in the final round, though Carlsen did not exert excessive pressure, as a draw was enough for him to qualify. This worked in Abdusattorov’s favour, as he needed that half-point even more. After all, he had managed to prevail against **Sindarov** in the all-Uzbek clash.

‘Winning on demand’ rarely works out, as **Niemann** discovered in the final round. Even a well-beaten **Aronian** had nothing to give away – draw!

By the end of the day, the pairings for the knockout tournament were set: **Carlsen** chose **Abdusattorov** as his opponent, meaning **Keymer** automatically faced **Caruana**. In the battle for 5th to 8th place, **Niemann** chose **Aronian**, meaning that **Erigaisi** had to face **Sindarov**.

### Semifinals – Carlsen and Caruana prevail

With a snowy landscape in Weissenhaus as a backdrop, none of the semi-final matches – played with a time control of 25 minutes plus 10-second increments – ended in a 2 : 2 draw, meaning that no tie-breaks, which would have had to be decided immediately in Armageddon, were required.

**Carlsen** retained control against **Abdusattorov** in the decisive phases of their four-game match despite being pressed for time. Nevertheless, he remarked: “It was definitely a very tough match against someone who, in my opinion, gets stronger every time I play him.”<sup>5</sup> The Uzbek grandmaster’s tournament strategy was to play quickly and put his opponent under time pressure, meaning Carlsen survived several critical phases with very little time remaining. The Grand Slam winner arrived somewhat late for the first game of the day and consequently missed the joint analysis. Consequently unprepared, he spent almost five minutes on his first move and a further three and a half minutes on his second. Abdusattorov gained an advantage, but Carlsen found sufficient counterplay with the black pieces to secure a draw.

The second game also ended in a draw – somewhat surprisingly for some spectators, as Abdusattorov had a considerable time advantage of 10 minutes to Carlsen’s half a minute. Al-

*Time Control: 25m + 10s*

#### *Semifinals*

|                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Carlsen (NOR) – Abdusattorov (UZB) | 3 : 1   |
| Caruana (USA) – Keymer (GER)       | 2½ : 1½ |

#### *5th – 8th Place*

|                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Niemann (USA) – Aronian (USA)   | 2½ : 1½ |
| Erigaisi (IND) – Sindarov (UZB) | 3 : 1   |

5 <https://www.freestyle-chess.com/news/carlsen-caruana-to-fight-for-freestyle-world-title/>  
Also the source for all further quotes in this section.



### Editor's note

“Playing Chess Human against Human again” – Isn’t this slogan a bit confusing at first glance? Why ‘again’? Didn’t we always play chess, human against human? Apart from the man-machine duels, which have been obsolete for a decade or two, simply because the computers have become far too powerful. The influence of chess engines, however, hasn’t diminished; on the contrary, it has increased dramatically, not only in correspondence chess, where it is quite obvious, but among the world’s best players and their seconds.

Either you play opening variations approved by Stockfish & Co. and diligently feed your memory until your head is spinning, or you play some kind of ‘crap’ where the exact sequence of moves doesn’t matter so much. Sporting factors are becoming increasingly important, especially with ever-shorter time controls. – Well, or you just play ‘Freestyle’, ‘Chess960’, ‘Fischer Random Chess’ – whatever you want to call it – and try to push back the influence of the computer that way.

How does Carlsen’s long-standing second, Peter Heine Nielsen – one of the leading opening experts – view the current state of top-level chess? This is the subject of the following interview transcripts<sup>1</sup>, which we owe to Thorsten Cmiel and are reproducing here in excerpts.

## ‘Playing Chess Human against Human again’

Excerpts from a conversation with Peter Heine Nielsen  
about the influence of computers and Freestyle chess

*by Thorsten Cmiel*

My conversation partner is Danish chess grandmaster Peter Heine Nielsen. With nine World Championship title matches won, the 52-year-old is the most successful second in chess history to date. After initially working for Viswanathan Anand, he has been assisting Magnus Carlsen since the 2013 World Championship match. Peter strongly advocates the idea that the world’s best chess player should be determined through Freestyle chess (others call it Chess960 or Fischer chess). Some controversial views on classical chess, which I found exaggerated yet fascinating, prompted me to ask him for an interview, which we conducted in English via video conference in mid-September 2025, coinciding with the final round of the Grand Swiss tournament.

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1 The full interview was published on February 17, 2026, in German on Thorsten Cmiel’s blog *Chess Ecosystem*. <https://chessecosystem.com/2026/02/17/schach-wieder-mensch-gegen-mensch-spielen/>

With the author’s kind permission, we have largely limited our selection of passages to the subject outlined above. Yet, we warmly recommend to read the entire interview, which includes some sample games and photos. Our English version has been agreed with the author.

### **How existential is the crisis in classical chess?**

When I ask him whether classical chess is in an existential crisis, Peter surprises me with the assessment that chess at the highest level is largely solved. Peter isn't sure whether classical chess will still serve to determine the world champion for perhaps another 15 years, but he sees problems ahead. (...)

### **What is a good move in top-level chess?**

(...) The fact that players like Caruana or Gukesh both play early moves like c2–c3 is an even stronger sign, because these are very passive moves. Such moves have been played 150 years ago because people didn't understand the dynamics. Now, he says, we've reached a point where all dynamic positions have been solved, and top players have to play something boring just to get the game going. In contrast, he hardly ever sees the King's Indian Defense at the highest level anymore.

"My argument is that when we play Freestyle chess, no one can remember solutions for 900 positions, which means we can start playing chess based on general principles, human against human. My general point is that in Freestyle chess you see how players think, whereas in classical chess you largely see people trying to remember." Here, too, I instinctively agree with Peter Heine. (...)

### **Why Freestyle?**

"Freestyle has been a long-standing dream of Magnus'. Initially, I thought that classical chess should be played with a long time control and Freestyle chess with a short time control. Magnus, however, thought it should be exactly the opposite. The Freestyle series was an opportunity to try it out. I don't think Magnus wants to abolish classical chess, but that it's his least preferred form of the game."

### **Explainability**

I bring up with Peter the problem that even strong grandmasters can't explain the moves in Freestyle without computer assistance. I'm initially surprised by his answer:

"I agree with this view in principle. That is, of course, a disadvantage. You say that it is difficult for grandmasters to follow, but let me ask you, how many people can understand the current final round in the Grand Swiss, where two candidate spots are being contested, and I mean: truly understand. That requires a very good understanding. I mean, you have to understand the games, understand the tiebreak system, and so on." I don't agree with him on this point, because I believe that classical chess is entirely explainable to those interested – and indeed to spectators of very different playing strengths.

(...)

### **The Academic Perspective**

Chess has become quite artificial due to the influence of computers and the fact that you always start from the same position. "That's why, over time, I've come to view it from an academic perspective: What is the best game? I think Freestyle chess is a better game than regular chess."



Many young players at the Menzelinsk Freestyle Grand Prix in 2025

In 2025, new Chess960 events for club players were created in countries such as Mongolia, Iran, Greece, Poland, Ireland, Portugal, Austria, Italy and Canada. As far as Russia is concerned, the Republic of Tatarstan (to which Menzelinsk also belongs, by the way) was particularly active in organising Chess960 events. The strongest of these was a two-day rapid chess tournament held as part of the annual Nezhmetdinov Memorial from 31 May to 1 June 2025 in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan and one of Russia's largest cities. There was also the Tatarstan Freestyle Chess Grand Prix, which consisted of several rapid chess Swiss events and the final rapid tournament won by Vladislav Artemiev.



Impression from the 3rd stage of the Tatarstan Chess960 Grand Prix (Kazan 2025)

Around 400 events per year, including those for beginners or small children, some with 10 or fewer players – still very rare? Or not so scarce anymore? Compared to the last year before Corona (2019), when there were only a few dozen Chess 960 events worldwide, this is of course much better. Compared to orthodox chess, 400 tournaments per year are of course only a drop in the ocean. But while the number of tournaments will certainly increase, the ‘quality’ of the tournaments is even more important. And if you pay attention to that, you quickly lose your optimism, because **almost all of these** (about 400) **o-t-b events in 2025 were played with rapid or even blitz time controls.**

## Online Chess 960

Let’s stay with the positive news for a moment: online chess is also experiencing growth. First of all, Chess.com has teamed up with Freestyle Chess Operations GmbH to launch Freestyle Friday (in January 2025) – a weekly online blitz tournament based on the Swiss system, similar to Titled Tuesday, but in Chess 960. Many top players, including Hikaru Nakamura, Hans Niemann and Magnus Carlsen, have participated in Freestyle Fridays several times alongside the ‘regular’ title holders; the favourites have won many of them – but of course not all, because 3m+1s online blitz does not require exactly the same skills as winning Grand Slam phases on the board.

Chess.com regular prize-free arenas with different time controls (10’+0”, 5’+0”, 3’+0”, 1’+0”) usually attract more than 400 to over 1400 participants: as the chess community likes to say, the numbers speak for themselves. However, the same applies to the time controls...

| Arena                                                                                                                                     | Swiss  | Titled Tuesday | Live 960               |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------|------------------------|--|
| Name                                                                                                                                      | Rating | Players        | Date                   |  |
|  1 0 Chess960<br>pika_jude   Score: 46/1               | Open   | 504            | Jan 12, 2026, 11:30 PM |  |
|  5 0 Chess960<br>JMSA1965   Score: 55/1                | Open   | 1342           | Jan 12, 2026, 9:30 PM  |  |
|  3 0 Chess960<br>NorthRemembersNS   Score: 44/1        | Open   | 714            | Jan 12, 2026, 7:15 PM  |  |
|  10 0 Chess960<br>yasinHEMA   Score: 42/1              | Open   | 1152           | Jan 12, 2026, 6:45 PM  |  |
|  1 0 Chess960<br>Icarus0099   Score: 46/1              | Open   | 449            | Jan 12, 2026, 5:30 PM  |  |
|  Freestyle Arena Internal TCO<br>W_Ochhi   Score: 25/1 | Open   | 13             | Jan 12, 2026, 5:00 PM  |  |
|  5 0 Chess960<br>zklr   Score: 55/1                    | Open   | 1104           | Jan 12, 2026, 3:30 PM  |  |

Screenshot from Chess.com

and the spot in the knockout qualification for FIDE-Freestyle Rapid World Championship 2026. But...

19 ♖c1??

White wanted to castle but either forgot that in online chess960 the king must be placed on the rook (not on c1 or g1!) for that, or it was simply a tragic mouse slip. 19 0-0-0 ♖e7 20 f5 ♙b5 (20... ♙xe2 21 ♚d7† ♙f8 22 ♚f7†) 21 c4 leads to a winning position for White.

19... ♙xe2, and White had to resign. 0-1

Now let's see how „deep and sophisticated“ is the format chosen by FIDE to determine one of the spots in the over-the-board World Championship 2027...

OREST\_VOVK – SERGIOCHESS83

Freestyle Friday, Chess.com,  
14.02.2025 · online blitz 3m+1s

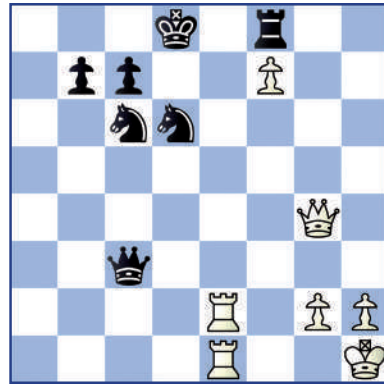
A. Deviatkin

P 614 

1 ♘c3 d5 2 e4 d4 3 ♘e2 e5 4 ♘eg3 g6 5 ♙c4 ♚d6 6 d3 ♙e6 7 ♙xe6 ♚xe6 8 0-0 f6 9 f4 ♘f7 10 ♚f3 ♘d7 11 f5 ♚c6 12 fxg6 hxg6 13 ♚e2 0-0-0 14 ♘f2 ♙e7 15 ♙d2 ♙b8 16 c4 dxc3 17 bxc3 ♙c5 18 ♙h1 a6 19 ♘g4 ♚e6 20 ♘e3 ♘b6 21 ♘g4 ♙e7 22 a4 ♚d6 23 a5 ♘c8 24 ♚ab1 ♙g8 25 ♘f2 f5 26 exf5 gxf5 27 ♚fe1 ♙h4 28 ♚f3 e4 29 dxe4 ♙xg3 30 exf5 ♚d5 31 ♙xg3 ♚xd2 32 ♘e4 ♚a2 33 ♘xd6 ♘cxd6 34 ♙h4 ♚xa5 35 f6 ♚xc3 36 ♚ec1 ♚e5 37 ♚e1 ♚f5 38 ♚f1 ♚g6 39 ♚a4 ♙g8 40 ♙b2 ♚d3 41 ♚fb1 ♚c3 42 ♚xa6 ♘d8 43 f7 ♙f8 44 ♚a2 ♙c8 45 ♙a8† ♘d7 46 ♙a4† ♘c6 47 ♚g4† ♙e7 48 ♚e2† ♘d8 49 ♚be1

(see next diagram)

White is FM Orest Vovk with 2315 FIDE standard rating, Black is a strong GM, Sergey Grigoriants (FIDE standard rating 2544), normally a solid positional player. However, the game has entered the 1-second zone, and the rest was anything but normal:



49...b5??

49... ♚xf7

50 ♚g8

No comment except for the question marks. The time control speaks for itself!

50... ♘d7 51 ♚xf8 ♘d4 52 ♚e8†? ♘xe8 53 f8 ♚??? ♘d6?? 54 ♚g7† ♙c6 55 ♚e3 b4??? 56 ♚g3??? ♚c5 57 ♚h3 ♘c4 58 ♚e5?? ♘xe5 59 ♚h6† ♚d6 60 ♚g1??? ♚xh6 61 ♚c1† ♘d5?? sergiochess83 won by resignation.

0-1

Let me finish this article by annotating two classical chess960 games played in 2025.

M. CARLSEN (2833) –

N. ABDUSATTOROV (2766)

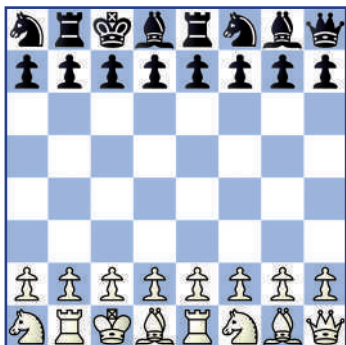
Freestyle Weissenhaus, Knockout  
(1.1), 09.02.2025 · 90m+30s

A. Deviatkin

A brilliant, coherent game, a textbook example from a strategic standpoint. Abdusattorov made a couple of natural yet careless moves in the opening, which Magnus exploited with clinical precision, slowly but relentlessly mounting the attack on the a-side. In blitz and rapid chess, Abdusattorov might have gotten away with something like this thanks to his ingenuity and phenomenal ability to calculate quickly. But in the classical format, where there's time to think, map out a plan, and calmly calculate the specifics, that's not always the case.



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1 f4

White is attacking the a7-pawn immediately with his bishop. Black has the choice – either to protect it or to play “Petroff style”. What is better?

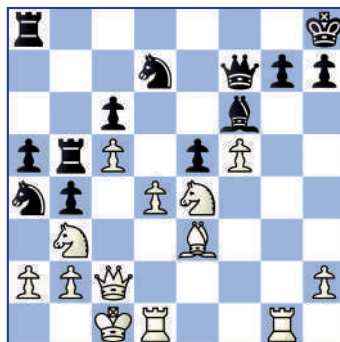
1...f5

1...♘b6! makes sense, as played in the same round by everyone except Abdusattorov. If now 2 e4 (or 2 g4), then 2...f5 is possible. If 2 ♘b3, then 2...f5.

It looks like the solid 2...f6?! chosen by Fedoseev against Aronian is inferior: 3 e4 e5 4 f5! – grabbing the space and restricting the f8-knight – 4...d5 5 g4 ♘f7 6 exd5 ♙xd5 7 ♙f3 c6 8 ♘g3 ♙e7 9 0–0–0 ♖g8 10 d3 ♙b4 11 c3 ♙e7 12 c4! ♙xf3 13 ♖xf3 ♖f7 14 ♘e4



14...0–0 15 ♙e3 ♘a4 16 ♖g1 b5 17 c5 b4 18 ♖f2 ♙b5 19 ♖c2 a5 20 d4! ♖a8 21 g5 ♙h8 22 gxf6 ♙xf6



23 d5 cxd5 24 ♘d6 ♖f8 25 ♘xb5 d4 26 c6 ♖c8 27 ♘3xd4 exd4 28 ♙xd4 ♘ac5 29 ♙xf6 ♘xf6 30 c7 b3 31 axb3 ♘a6 32 ♙b1 ♘b4 33 ♖c4 ♘e8 34 ♖d8 ♖xf5† 35 ♙a1 ♘c2† 36 ♖xc2 1–0 (36) L. Aronian (2745) – V. Fedoseev (2724) Weissenhaus 2025. This strategic brilliancy is another good example of how different fast chess 960 is from the classical one (the readers could already see some fragments from the 10’+10” games played by Aronian on the previous day).

After 2...f5, Sindarov, Gukesh, and Firouzja opted for the most natural 3 e4.

However, 3 e4 is not approved by Stockfish, which instead suggests two crazy alternatives: 3 ♘g3, preparing 4 e4 fxe4 5 ♘xe4, but counter-intuitively blocking the queen in the corner; and even 3 h4!?

3...fxe4 4 ♖xe4, and Black was okay after 4...♙d5 in all the three games, e.g. 5 ♖e1 ♖g8 6 ♘e3 ♙f7 7 ♙f3 c6 8 0–0–0 ♙c7 9 g3 0–0–0= 1/2 (60) J. Sindarov (2700) – H. Nakamura (2802) Weissenhaus 2025).

1...b6 doesn’t lose at once, but opens up no piece and just hinders Black’s development, also weakening the black king’s position.

2 ♙xa7 ♙xa2 3 e4!

(see next diagram)

The b8-rook has no escape.

3...♙xb1?

The first superficial decision by Nodirbek. The b1-rook could have waited just like the b8-rook! Correct was 3...fxe4! If now (I) 4 g3 (as in



(Editor's note) This article is a slightly revised version of the blog 'Non-human 960 openings',<sup>1</sup> published in five parts on *Lichess* in 2025/26, by *IM justiniano565*.

# Non human Chess960 Openings

**What Humans don't usually think about:  
searching for Treasures**

*Santiago Beltrán*

## I

Sometimes I play Chess960 games against *Stockfish*. I divide them into two categories: games where the module defeats me, and games where it humiliates me. Occasionally, in some positions, I've observed that some of its first moves were very strange, at least for my classical setup and conservative playing style. 960 is chess, and the centre is the centre, development is, etc., etc. I personally play for amusement, so I want to share with you the surreal moves that make the game so enjoyable. I'm not interested in an in-depth analysis – anyone can use *Stockfish* – but simply want to highlight the moves that are strange and shocking for a human player.

The adjectives I attribute to them as „strange“ or „shocking“ are subjective. Just because such moves don't occur to me doesn't mean that other, more creative players might not consider and even play them. Anyway, all moves shown here have been played in a very small percentage of games between human players<sup>2</sup>, assuming that they were played.

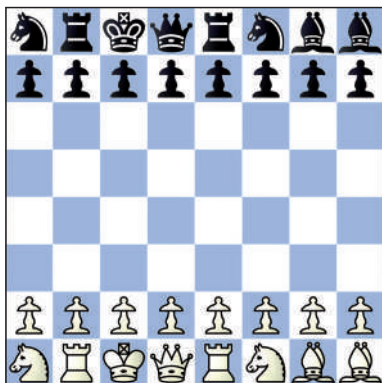
All the variations presented here were discovered purely by chance, almost like finding a treasure. Variations are not only amusing or astonishing, but also useful for playing. They can provide inspiration and open the door to chess that may be further removed from classical principles than we might think.

When I refer to the flanks of the board, I will use Fischer's terms 'h-side' and 'a-side', as 'king side' or 'queen side' are outdated in this context.

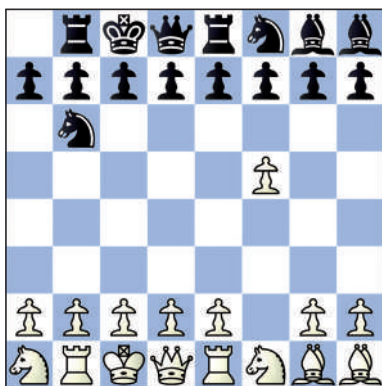
The first position I present is the starting position 351.

- 1 The adaptation for the *Yearbook* required rearrangements to the text, whilst minor inaccuracies and linguistic issues have also been fixed, without detracting from the blog's original lively character as a narrative and dialogue with the reader. - In some parts of the text, the reader comes across phrases and words that the author used just for fun. Few readers are likely to recognise these immediately as quotes or references to famous films or books, such as *Clockwork Orange*, *Mars Attacks!* or *Star Trek*.
- 2 The statistical figures in this article concerning 'human' games refer primarily to the Chess960 games played and rated on *Lichess*, unless otherwise stated in the text.

Position 351 NRKQRNBB



A weakness on a7 makes **1 f4** the first move to consider; after the most natural **1...♖b6**, comes the surprise: **2 f5**

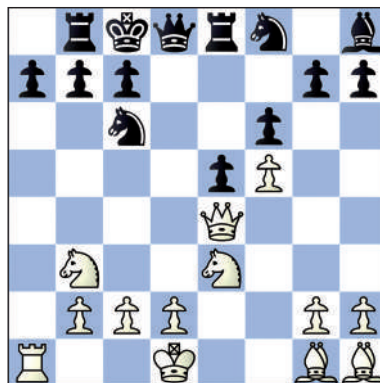


Gaining space on the h-side, disturbing the natural development and forcing Black to enclose one of his bishops. In hindsight, the merits of such a move are easy to explain, apart from the fact that you're moving the same unprotected pawn for the second time, thereby kicking everything I learnt about opening rules in my distant youth. *Stockfish* does not blink and evaluates this position with a +0,2

As almost all legal moves are possible for Black I will outline two possible continuations, one trying to occupy the centre ignoring f5 pawn, and another trying to attack it from the very first move.

I) **2...e5 3 e4 d5 4 exd5** and here the e4 square is the base of White's strategy. I will show an aggressive variation with an exchange sacrifice. I didn't always choose the best move suggested, but let myself be guided by the question 'What happens if...?'

**4...♖xd5 5 ♖f3 f6 6 ♖b3 ♖b4 7 ♖e4 ♖xa2 8 ♖d1 ♖d5 9 ♖a1 ♖b4 10 ♖e3 ♖xe4 11 ♖xe4 ♖c6**



Position after 11...♖c6

The position is about +20 after **12 ♖c4**, other moves also give a significant advantage for White, a pawn and an exchange down, king in the middle and no obvious weaknesses in Black's camp. I don't know what you may be thinking – I can see the activity of White's pieces, but not enough compensation. The module disagrees, but is usually right.

II) **2...e6** attempts to capture this bold pawn. **3 e4 g6 4 ♖e3** – notice that it is difficult for Black to attack the advanced pawn with pieces, **4...gxf5 5 exf5 d5**.

(see next diagram)

One might think that **6...d4** is a threat, or at least that's what I thought.

Stocky has its own ideas, **6 g3 d4 7 ♖g4 ♖g5 8 ♖b3 0-0-0 9 ♖e2**. Do you want to capture the pawn? Do it, **9... ♖xf5 10 ♖h6 ♖g6 11 ♖xg8 ♖xg8**. Pawn down and a knight moved four times to capture a trapped bishop.

## Stockfish and practical Play – two different Worlds in Chess 960

*Arno Nickel*

In the previous issue of the *Yearbook*, we presented the four best opening lines for each of the 960 starting positions, as evaluated by Stockfish 16, and began to explore some of the structural characteristics of Chess 960 as well as the specifics of various starting positions. This was essentially a theoretical study, apart from game analyses, which also formed a significant part of the volume. One of the recurring questions is in which positions White can benefit most from his first move advantage. How many such starting positions might there be in Chess 960, a rather complex variant of chess, and what conclusions can be drawn from this in comparison with the classic starting position 518?

Of course, these questions could not be resolved conclusively, but there is good reason to believe that, in any Chess 960 starting position, the first-move advantage does not lead to a decisive advantage for White when both sides play their best. Admittedly, there do seem to be – theoretically – a few critical positions, but their proportion ranges from 0.5 to 3 per cent, depending on how one defines ‘critical’. Incidentally, this is also consistent with tournament experience in Chess 960 at correspondence chess level, where, at the very highest level, the ‘draw rate’ is no lower than in standard chess.

Within this context, we would now like to carry out a similarly wide-ranging statistical analysis of game results from various databases. Do the practical results for the starting positions match Stockfish’s values, and what is the overall impression from this comparison?

Ideally, we would focus primarily on games played under classical time controls, but unfortunately only a few thousand such games have been played and recorded in databases up to now.<sup>1</sup> If we nevertheless wish to compile a reference database that is as meaningful as possible, comprising several tens of thousands of games, we have no choice but to make compromises; in other words, we must also include games with shorter time controls and those played online.

Under these conditions, of course, there can be no question of a scientific study; instead, we must adopt a pragmatic approach to gain initial insights that will be useful for finding our way through the Chess 960 jungle. Human playing practice can also be measured and evaluated, with certain limitations, on the basis of the available rapid and blitz games.

In fact, short time controls lead to a systematic distortion of the draw rate. Whilst a large number of game results may reasonably reflect the balance between White and Black – both lose games in equal measure due to time trouble and blunders – they hardly reflect the chances of a draw for either side. Nevertheless, as we are comparing different starting positions with each other and with the Stockfish evaluation, a number of interesting trends can already be identified here.

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1 The largest dataset relating to games played under classical time control comes from the two Grenke Freestyle Opens held in Karlsruhe in 2025 and 2026, comprising around 2,500 games based on 18 starting positions.

### Our dataset classified as ‘human’

Our 960 reference database, labelled ‘Human’, comprises 37,400 rated games from 1996 up to 2026; both players with at least a rating of 2000. In fact, the average Elo in this database is 2390. Most games were played online (64%), almost exclusively on Chess.com; a small percentage were played on Lichess.org. The minimum time control here was 3m+1s. An unspecified proportion were played with time controls such as 5m+3s, 10m+Xs, 15m+Xs, 25m+Xs, etc.

As correspondence chess games, particularly those from before the AI revolution, also bear a certain human touch (especially in the opening), such games were included as well (21%). They certainly get closer to the objective truth of positions than blitz games. And it is hard to overlook the fact that the spectre of ‘Remistod’ in correspondence chess – brought about by the triumph of computers – does not stop at Chess960 either. Presumably, the correspondence chess results compensate somewhat for the inevitably one-sided trends in online chess, where many games that should actually end in a draw are decided by the dictates of the chess clock.

Overall, only games in which at least 10 moves were played were taken into account. This filtered out games that were abandoned early and those featuring gross errors in the early opening stage. About 15% come from games played traditionally on the board.

### And a second dataset classified as ‘engine’

Another aspect of the following statistics concerns the extensive playing history of chess engines in computer-only tournaments, which is very well documented. Here, the dataset is based on approximately 798,000 games from 2006 to 2025. This corresponds to an average of 832 games per starting position, with an average Elo rating of 3300. Here too, games of fewer than 10 moves were excluded, as were engines rated at less than 2,000 Elo.

More than 95% of the games were played as part of the *Computer Chess Rating List* competition<sup>2</sup> involving more than 500 chess programmes, with a time control of 2 minutes for 40 moves. A small proportion comes from the *TCEC tournaments*<sup>3</sup> with long time controls.

On the whole, the results from the engine games confirm many Stockfish favourites, which becomes particularly clear when compared with the 100 best Stockfish candidates and is indicated by yellow highlighting. However, there are also numerous exceptions that put the Stockfish values into perspective, and there are indications of the extent to which these are positions with a below-average or above-average tendency to end in a draw. The values that are significantly below average in relation to the general trend for all Chess960 starting positions are highlighted in purple.

It’s instructive to compare Stockfish’s evals with the results from human games, although, given the still relatively small data set, these can only be considered initial indications. The

2 see <https://computerchess.org.uk/404FRC/>

Testing summary (June 2026): Total: 838’849 games played by 576 programs

White wins: 303’363 (36.2%), Black wins: 235’940 (28.1%), Draws: 299’546 (35.7%), White score: 54.0%

3 Top Chess Engine Championship (TCEC);

cf. e.g. <https://lichess.org/broadcast/tcec-double-fischer-random-chess-5/iFePUcW>

37,400 games are distributed very unevenly across 959 starting positions (P 518 not included). The distribution across groups of varying sizes is as follows:

- 200–300 games – 5 starting positions
- 100–199 games – 60 starting positions
- 50–99 games – 228 starting positions
- 10–49 games – 494 starting positions (grey)
- 0–9 games – 172 starting positions (no entries)

### About the tables

1) **Main table** of starting positions 1–960 with Stockfish's evals, compared with the percentage performance according to the 'Engine' and 'Human' datasets;

2) **Stockfish 18 top 100 starting positions for White** compared with the results from engine games and human games;

3) **Human top 50 starting positions** compared with Stockfish evals and the results from engine games;

4) **Human worst 20 starting positions** compared with Stockfish evals and the results from engine games;

5) **Engine top 20 starting positions with the highest draw rate;**

6) **Engine top 50 starting positions with the highest Black win rate.**

The tables are intended as reference material and for readers' own study. In future editions of the *Chess 960 Yearbook*, this initial study will be continued with expanded and improved data.

First of all, it should be noted that this is a first attempt to provide a broad overview of which Chess 960 starting positions have appeared on the board in human chess to date, how often they have been played, and which have hardly ever been played at all. This endeavour alone – to bring structure to the chaos – should be worth the effort. In a second step, we shall focus more closely on the starting positions from various perspectives. In doing so, the performance of White and Black, when compared with the computer's evaluations are of great significance.<sup>4</sup>

In a third step, which we are not yet able to undertake here, it will then be interesting to define the structural characteristics of the starting positions under consideration and to examine the similarities and differences between them.

4 Santiago Beltrán adopted a similar approach – albeit one that was less pragmatic and more strictly scientific, drawing on a more extensive body of data – in his Lichess blog “How difficult for black are Fischer Random starting positions?” Subtitle: “What humans and Stockfish think about it”, published on March 5, 2026. The author's handle on Lichess is IM‘justiniano565’.

<https://lichess.org/@/justiniano565/blog/how-difficult-for-black-are-fischer-random-starting-positions/zc-4QQ6bR>

He concludes: “Relations between SF previsions and human results are very weak. No matter elo filtering”, and sets out the reasons why this is the case. Apart from the fundamental difference that “SF evaluation is objective and human play is subjective (...)” (he further elaborates on this), inadequacy of the data – which is based mainly on blitz games – also has a significant impact.

## Table legends

**No.** = Order or ranking in the table

**SP** (or simply ‘**P**’ elsewhere) = Starting position according to the generally accepted numbering system, whereby the position mathematically designated as ‘0’ is listed as number 960, a number that does not appear in the mathematical model.<sup>5</sup>

**Sf 18** = the position rating displayed by Stockfish 18 at a calculation depth of 40, based on its own test series for the *YB 2026* (hardware, parameters, etc.); as shown below the table, Sf 18 rates P 518 at 0.19 for White. The 88 highest-rated starting positions, ranging from 0.40 to 0.80, are highlighted in yellow.

**Engine %** = White’s performance calculated from engine games played between 2006 and 2025; broken down in the three columns to the right into White, draw and Black shares; based on 798,000 games. White performance of 58% and above are highlighted in yellow, whilst low performance of below 50% are highlighted in purple.

Accordingly, White wins are highlighted in yellow if they account for 41% or more (the average is 36.7%); White wins of 32% or less are highlighted in purple. The average draw rate is 34.6%; draw rates of 40% or more are highlighted in yellow, whilst those of 30% or less are highlighted in purple. Black wins account for an average of 28.7%; those at 33% or more are highlighted in yellow, whilst those at 25% or less are highlighted in purple.

**Human %** = White’s performance as determined from human games (as described and broken down above). Values of 58% and above are highlighted in yellow; those of 46% and below are highlighted in purple, provided that at least 50 games have been analysed for the starting position in question.

**H\*N** = the number of human games on which the figure is based.

Going through the tables in order.

1) **The complete table listing P 1–960.** It forms the basis for all subsequent tables.<sup>6</sup>

This very comprehensive table is primarily intended as a reference when one wishes to find out more about a specific starting position within the scope of our subject matter. The coloured markings indicate anomalies, but also highlight that the vast majority of starting positions do not exhibit any statistically significant peculiarities in terms of performance – at least not based on the games played by humans that we have analysed so far.

It can become interesting when several coloured markings appear side by side in a single row. Let’s take a look, for example – to stay on the first page of this table – at P 24.

| SP | Sf 18 | Engine % | White % | Draw % | Black % | Human % | H*N |
|----|-------|----------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-----|
| 24 | 0.43  | 59.7     | 45.2    | 28.9   | 25.9    | 55.6    | 54  |

Stockfish’s relatively high rating of 0.43 for White is confirmed here by the 59.7% win rate from engine tournaments, and the latter is accompanied by a high White score of 45.2% and a below-average draw rate. White’s 55.6% win rate from human games points slightly in the

5 Cf. <https://Chess960.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Chess960-starting-positions.pdf>;  
cf. also *Chess 960 Yearbook 2025*, p. 53-212

6 As the table runs to more than 20 pages, it does not appear immediately here, but at the end of this article.



same direction, but this figure is based on only 54 games, and, as a glance at the databases shows, the position has almost exclusively occurred in online blitz games.

As a closer examination of the unspectacular starting position reveals, it offers both sides few dynamic attacking options. The edge knight seems out of place and the minor pieces as a whole appear uncoordinated. Yet White can use his extra tempo to exert a slight, sustained initiative in a semi-closed position. That, at least, is the first impression.

The fact that there are unprotected pawns on e2 and e7 is irrelevant, as these squares are difficult for the opponent to attack. The kings, with rooks on either side, are safe. In terms of castling options, g-castling is practically the only viable choice once the f-rook has left the f1-square. Whether the h-rook should be brought into play in any other way remains an open question. So much for a brief exploration of this table without a specific question in mind.

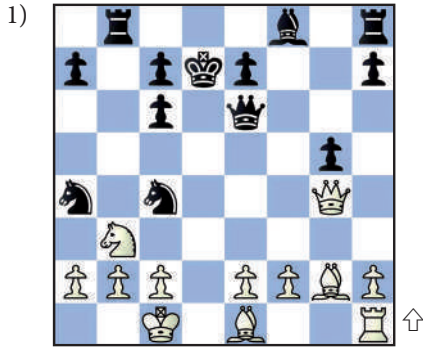
2) A first glance at the table showing the **top 100 starting positions according to Stockfish** offers further insights. It is immediately apparent that the results from human games show little correlation with Stockfish's trends. Conversely, there are numerous starting positions in which Black has performed better than White in human games, a phenomenon that does not occur with Stockfish evaluations, but also occurs – to a much lesser extent – in engine games

| No. | SP  | Sf 18 | Engine % | White % | Draw % | Black % | Human % | H*N |
|-----|-----|-------|----------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-----|
| 1   | 868 | 0.80  | 63.0     | 48.7    | 28.6   | 22.8    | 47.9    | 71  |
| 2   | 879 | 0.77  | 59.7     | 46.8    | 25.7   | 27.5    | 50.0    | 42  |
| 3   | 80  | 0.75  | 55.8     | 44.5    | 22.5   | 33.0    | 54.7    | 43  |
| 4   | 794 | 0.66  | 57.8     | 43.1    | 29.3   | 27.6    | 50.0    | 24  |
| 5   | 783 | 0.65  | 57.4     | 43.9    | 26.9   | 29.1    | 60.0    | 15  |
| 6   | 604 | 0.64  | 61.8     | 47.1    | 29.3   | 23.6    | 52.1    | 47  |
| 7   | 298 | 0.59  | 54.1     | 38.7    | 30.7   | 30.7    | 50.0    | 21  |
| 8   | 880 | 0.59  | 58.1     | 42.1    | 32.0   | 25.9    | 49.4    | 164 |
| 9   | 333 | 0.55  | 61.3     | 45.0    | 32.5   | 22.6    |         |     |
| 10  | 608 | 0.54  | 57.7     | 43.1    | 29.1   | 27.8    | 55.3    | 19  |
| 11  | 941 | 0.54  | 60.2     | 44.8    | 30.7   | 24.5    | 64.7    | 17  |
| 12  | 348 | 0.53  | 57.9     | 42.9    | 29.9   | 27.2    |         |     |
| 13  | 399 | 0.53  | 51.0     | 36.1    | 29.7   | 34.2    | 53.8    | 13  |
| 14  | 620 | 0.53  | 59.7     | 44.9    | 29.6   | 25.5    | 50.0    | 13  |
| 15  | 760 | 0.53  | 59.1     | 45.2    | 27.8   | 27.0    | 47.1    | 136 |
| 16  | 927 | 0.53  | 54.9     | 40.6    | 28.5   | 31.0    | 56.1    | 49  |
| 17  | 578 | 0.52  | 55.9     | 40.2    | 31.4   | 28.5    | 62.5    | 32  |
| 18  | 605 | 0.52  | 59.6     | 44.1    | 30.9   | 25.0    |         |     |
| 19  | 249 | 0.51  | 55.7     | 37.1    | 37.2   | 25.7    | 53.1    | 64  |
| 20  | 792 | 0.51  | 58.3     | 42.7    | 31.1   | 26.2    | 47.5    | 20  |
| 21  | 864 | 0.51  | 60.6     | 42.1    | 36.9   | 20.9    | 66.7    | 15  |
| 22  | 193 | 0.49  | 54.5     | 38.7    | 31.5   | 29.8    | 68.2    | 11  |
| 23  | 70  | 0.48  | 56.6     | 38.3    | 36.5   | 25.3    | 58.1    | 43  |
| 24  | 248 | 0.48  | 59.8     | 45.9    | 27.8   | 26.3    |         |     |
| 25  | 312 | 0.48  | 54.4     | 36.6    | 35.5   | 27.9    | 55.0    | 10  |

| No. | SP  | Sf 18 | Engine % | White % | Draw % | Black % | Human % | H*N |
|-----|-----|-------|----------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-----|
| 26  | 336 | 0.48  | 55.1     | 40.2    | 29.7   | 30.1    | 57.7    | 13  |
| 27  | 944 | 0.48  | 54.6     | 41.1    | 26.9   | 32.1    |         |     |
| 28  | 268 | 0.47  | 56.5     | 40.2    | 32.5   | 27.3    | 61.1    | 18  |
| 29  | 408 | 0.47  | 60.6     | 46.0    | 29.2   | 24.9    | 45.6    | 57  |
| 30  | 646 | 0.47  | 58.7     | 41.2    | 34.9   | 23.9    | 45.0    | 60  |
| 31  | 886 | 0.47  | 60.6     | 42.9    | 35.3   | 21.8    |         |     |
| 32  | 181 | 0.46  | 52.7     | 37.5    | 30.4   | 32.1    | 46.7    | 12  |
| 33  | 310 | 0.46  | 58.1     | 41.1    | 34.0   | 24.9    | 51.8    | 57  |
| 34  | 373 | 0.46  | 56.5     | 42.7    | 27.6   | 29.7    | 53.5    | 57  |
| 35  | 484 | 0.46  | 56.6     | 36.7    | 39.7   | 23.7    | 50.0    | 58  |
| 36  | 565 | 0.46  | 55.1     | 39.5    | 31.1   | 29.4    | 43.8    | 64  |
| 37  | 696 | 0.46  | 57.5     | 40.2    | 34.5   | 25.4    | 49.5    | 103 |
| 38  | 735 | 0.46  | 54.3     | 39.6    | 29.4   | 30.9    |         |     |
| 39  | 749 | 0.46  | 60.4     | 45.1    | 30.5   | 24.4    | 56.7    | 97  |
| 40  | 768 | 0.46  | 57.5     | 41.4    | 32.1   | 26.4    | 60.7    | 14  |
| 41  | 245 | 0.45  | 56.5     | 38.6    | 35.7   | 25.6    | 44.4    | 18  |
| 42  | 32  | 0.44  | 54.7     | 39.2    | 30.9   | 29.8    | 50.0    | 39  |
| 43  | 111 | 0.44  | 53.9     | 38.7    | 30.3   | 30.9    | 54.2    | 12  |
| 44  | 273 | 0.44  | 51.7     | 37.6    | 28.2   | 34.2    |         |     |
| 45  | 305 | 0.44  | 54.4     | 40.7    | 27.4   | 31.9    | 60.7    | 14  |
| 46  | 314 | 0.44  | 59.3     | 43.8    | 31.0   | 25.2    | 52.1    | 70  |
| 47  | 317 | 0.44  | 58.3     | 42.9    | 30.7   | 26.4    | 51.1    | 45  |
| 48  | 461 | 0.44  | 57.2     | 38.9    | 36.5   | 24.6    | 51.0    | 48  |
| 49  | 845 | 0.44  | 58.5     | 42.4    | 32.1   | 25.5    | 59.3    | 43  |
| 50  | 848 | 0.44  | 56.0     | 41.9    | 28.1   | 30.1    | 50.0    | 12  |
| 51  | 935 | 0.44  | 56.2     | 40.3    | 31.7   | 28.0    | 54.3    | 46  |
| 52  | 24  | 0.43  | 59.7     | 45.2    | 28.9   | 25.9    | 55.6    | 54  |
| 53  | 148 | 0.43  | 55.0     | 37.8    | 34.4   | 27.8    | 60.5    | 19  |
| 54  | 165 | 0.43  | 57.3     | 40.0    | 34.5   | 25.5    | 55.9    | 34  |
| 55  | 392 | 0.43  | 53.1     | 37.3    | 31.6   | 31.2    | 47.3    | 37  |
| 56  | 630 | 0.43  | 55.0     | 37.4    | 35.1   | 27.5    | 59.1    | 149 |
| 57  | 777 | 0.43  | 53.2     | 36.9    | 32.6   | 30.5    | 50.0    | 83  |
| 58  | 784 | 0.43  | 53.6     | 39.8    | 27.5   | 32.7    | 53.6    | 182 |
| 59  | 188 | 0.42  | 55.4     | 38.7    | 33.4   | 27.8    | 50.0    | 50  |
| 60  | 200 | 0.42  | 56.8     | 40.5    | 32.6   | 26.9    |         |     |
| 61  | 251 | 0.42  | 55.2     | 37.4    | 35.6   | 27.0    | 47.1    | 17  |
| 62  | 272 | 0.42  | 54.1     | 41.1    | 25.9   | 33.0    | 55.0    | 50  |
| 63  | 279 | 0.42  | 55.6     | 40.5    | 30.2   | 29.3    | 43.3    | 15  |
| 64  | 349 | 0.42  | 56.5     | 36.7    | 39.5   | 23.8    | 55.2    | 126 |
| 65  | 388 | 0.42  | 55.8     | 38.9    | 33.7   | 27.4    | 53.7    | 41  |
| 66  | 557 | 0.42  | 60.8     | 43.7    | 34.2   | 22.0    |         |     |
| 67  | 645 | 0.42  | 56.1     | 39.2    | 33.7   | 27.1    | 50.0    | 11  |
| 68  | 56  | 0.41  | 53.6     | 36.7    | 33.8   | 29.5    | 66.7    | 21  |
| 69  | 173 | 0.41  | 54.9     | 37.8    | 34.1   | 28.1    | 53.8    | 13  |
| 70  | 203 | 0.41  | 54.8     | 42.1    | 25.4   | 32.4    | 48.8    | 42  |

**Nesterov – Quilter**

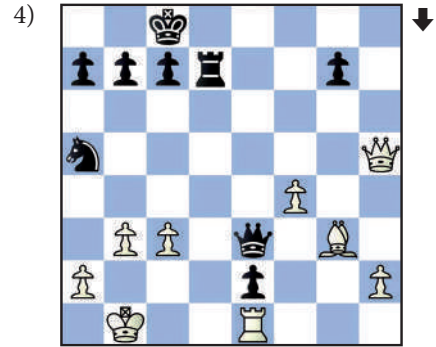
Grand Slam Weissenhaus 2025 · Play-In



How should White conclude the attack?

**Dvirnyy – F. Svane**

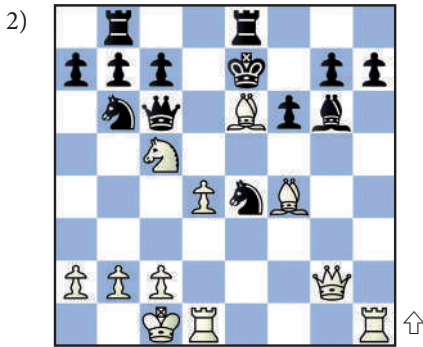
Grand Slam Weissenhaus 2025 · Play-In



Black to move and win

**P. H. Nielsen – Kleiman**

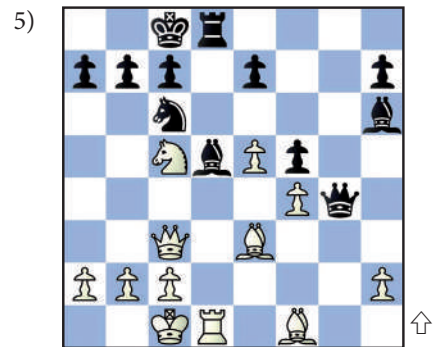
Grand Slam Weissenhaus 2025 · Play-In



White to move and win

**Muradli – Aradhyha**

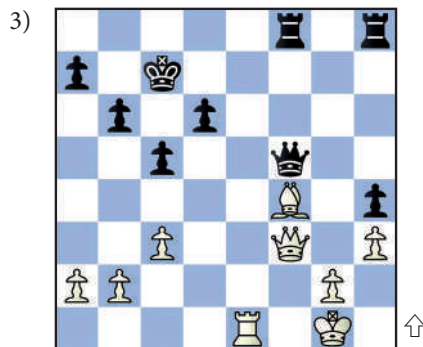
Grand Slam Weissenhaus 2025 · Play-In



White to move and win

**Sowinski – Lauda**

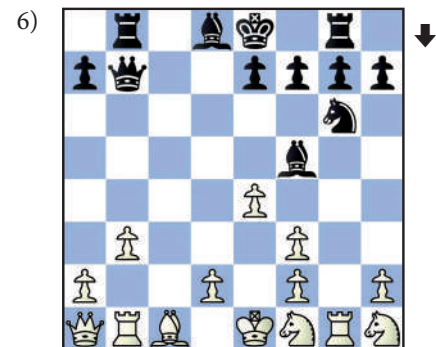
Grand Slam Weissenhaus 2025 · Play-In



White to move and win

**Puzyrevsky – Paravyan**

Grand Slam Weissenhaus 2025 · Play-In



Black to move and win

## Introduction to the Games Section

The year 2025 saw an explosive growth in the number of Chess960 tournament games thanks to the **Freestyle boom**, including a vast number of matches between world-class players. Not only did the number of tournaments increase dramatically, but so too did the number of participants in Chess960 open tournaments. This was most spectacularly evident at the Grenke Open in Karlsruhe, which attracted around 550 players – a record that was repeated in 2026 – the majority of whom (60 per cent) competed in the A Open, with an average Elo rating of approximately 2250 and 160 international participants.

In this *Yearbook*, we can only present a fraction of the interesting games from the most important tournaments. As in the first volume, most of the games are presented in *Informator* style, based on carefully checked and selected *Stockfish* analyses. These analyses are intended as a guide for replaying the games, but not as individual, in-depth or instructive game commentaries by grandmasters or the players themselves. However valuable and sought-after such annotated games may be, this would go far beyond the scope of this publication.

However, this second volume also contains more than 60 games analysed and annotated by **GM Andrey Deviatkin**, a dozen of which appear in the appendix to his article *Classical Chess 960 To be or not to be?* and a further 50 from which the experienced coach has compiled his *Puzzles*. These latter games do not claim to be comprehensive or in-depth overall, but rather focus on the positions relevant to the puzzles and their background. It is easy to identify which games have been selected and commented on by Andrey Deviatkin from the game header and his written notes.

The games, presented purely in ‘**Informator**’ style, often show longer variations illustrating how the game might develop alternatively from the perspective of *Stockfish*, however, complete variation trees cannot be displayed here, as this too would go beyond the scope of this work. These variations are generally very plausible, although from a human player’s perspective they may not necessarily be practical in individual cases, particularly when time is short or in view of the desired outcome of the game.

However, this is not the situation facing the reader, who we assume is primarily interested in understanding the position – much like a correspondence chess player who can afford the luxury of analysing the position without time pressure. What is curious, however, is the fact that nowadays many games on the board are inevitably played as ‘deciding games’ – the so-called ‘**mini-matches**’ that have become commonplace in knockout tournaments.

The outcome of the first game often leads to a situation where one player absolutely must win the second game, whilst a draw is sufficient for the other. This may be exciting from a sporting perspective – for some, even extending to Armageddon – but from a chess perspective it usually leads astray. Naturally, *Stockfish* pays no heed to such human sensitivities, but devotes itself entirely to the positions at hand. Readers who, thanks to the tournament reports and the information in the game header, are aware of what the match situation was like before the game began, will be best placed to assess such factors.

Given the lack of opening theory and the often short time-controls, it is hardly surprising that most games, even between top GMs, contain more mistakes than games in orthodox chess with starting position 518. So please do not be put off by the countless question marks in the analyses, often tempered by an accompanying exclamation mark ‘?!’.

In particular, we have endeavoured to include the games that proved decisive for the outcome of the tournament. With this in mind, we hope you'll enjoy replaying the games. If, on the other hand, you find exclamation marks rather rare, please bear in mind the approach taken by the great *Robert Hübner*, who dispensed with this punctuation mark entirely because he regarded it as a form of subjective judgement, which he did not consider valuable in analyses. We have not taken quite such a strict line, but have nevertheless limited ourselves to just a few such 'subjective' indications.

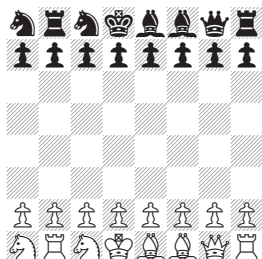
The Elo ratings provided are taken from information supplied by the respective organisers or streaming platforms. It is difficult to say how consistently this has been handled in each individual case, but there is hardly a standardised practice underlying it. In most cases, the figure given is the current FIDE standard rating, which at least provides some indication of a player's general strength.

A practical tip to finish with: The **starting position** of each game is shown the first time it appears as an empty diagram in a smaller font size and is labelled with the corresponding code, such as 'P 399'. If the same starting position appears immediately afterwards in the following game, the diagram is not usually repeated.

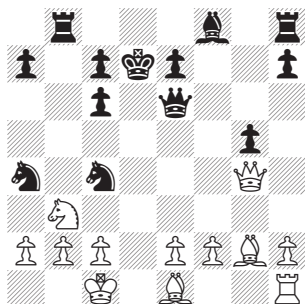
### (1) A. Nesterov – T. A. Quilter

Freestyle Grand Slam Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss  
Chess.com (1.39), 06.01.2025 · Online 10'+2"

*A. Deviatkin*



(P 170) 1 d4 f5 2 ♖ab3 ♘ab6 3 ♘d3 d6  
4 0–0–0 g5 5 g4 fxg4 6 ♖xg4 ♙d7 7 ♖g3 ♘c4  
8 ♙g2 ♘8b6 9 ♘dc5! dxc5 10 dxc5 ♘a4 11 c6  
bxc6 12 ♙xd7†! ♙xd7 13 ♖g4† ♖e6



13...♙d8! was the only way to resist: 14 ♘d4  
(14 ♙h3 ♖d5) 14...h5! (14...♙b6 15 ♙h3!)  
15 ♘e6† ♙c8 16 ♖xc4 ♘c5!! 17 ♖xc5 ♖xe6  
White has been attacking ferociously for the  
last 5 moves; he has sacrificed a lot of material  
and now it's time to prove the whole thing  
worth it:

14 ♙xc6†!

The double attack 14 ♖d4? just leads to  
equality: 14...♙d6! (14...♙c8 15 ♖xh8 ♖f6!  
is not losing either) 15 ♖xh8 (if 15 ♖xc4?  
then 15...♖d1†! 16 ♙xd1 ♘b2† 17 ♙c1  
♘xc4†) 15...♖f6!, forcing the exchange of  
the queens by attacking the b2-pawn. The  
endgame after 16 ♖xf6 exf6 is fine for Black.

14...♙d6

14...♙xc6 15 ♖xe6†

15 ♙b4†!!

The point. Yet another sacrifice allows the  
rook to join the attack quickly and decisively.  
After 15 ♖g3†? ♖e5! (15...♙xc6? 16 ♘d4†  
forking the king and the queen) Black es-  
capes to the endgame again: 16 ♖xe5† ♘xe5  
17 ♙xa4 ♘c4! 18 ♙c3 e5

15...♙xb4 16 ♙d1† ♙e5

16...♙xc6 17 ♖xe6†+–

17 ♖xg5† ♖f5 18 ♙d5† and Black resigned  
due to checkmate on the next move. 1–0

# Regulation for the Qualification to the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2027

## 1. General Provisions

1.1. A total of eight (8) players shall qualify for the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2027 in accordance with the qualification pathways set out in Articles 2.1 to 2.6 of these Regulations.

1.2. A player shall be deemed “qualified” once they have formally accepted a qualification spot.

1.3. In the event that a qualified player withdraws or is deemed ineligible under these Regulations, the corresponding qualification spot shall be reallocated in accordance with the applicable replacement procedure set out for the relevant qualification pathway.

## 2. Qualification Pathways

### 2.1. Three (3) spots – FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2026

2.1.1. Event: FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2026, Weissenhaus, Germany.

2.1.2. The players finishing in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in the final standings of the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2026 shall qualify.

2.1.3. If any of these players withdraws or is unable to participate, the vacant qualification spot shall be awarded in the following order of priority:

- a) The player finishing in 4th place in the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2026;
- b) The player finishing in 5th place in the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2026;
- c) The next highest-placed player (2nd, 3rd, etc.) in the Online Tournament played on Chess.com as defined in Article 2.6, who is not yet qualified, until a player accepts the spot.

### 2.2. One (1) spot - Grenke Freestyle Chess Open 2026

2.2.1. Event: Grenke Freestyle Chess Open 2026, Karlsruhe, Germany, April 2–6, 2026.

2.2.2. The player finishing in 1st place in the final ranking list shall qualify.

2.2.3. If this player withdraws or is already qualified for the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2027 at the start of the tournament, the qualification spot shall be awarded, in order of priority, to the next highest-placed player (2nd, 3rd, etc.) who is not yet qualified, until a player accepts the spot.

### 2.3. Two (2) spots – OTB or Online Tournament

2.3.1. Event: One over-the-board (OTB) or Online Tournament played in 2026.

2.3.2. The player finishing in 1st place in the final ranking list shall qualify.

2.3.3. If this player withdraws or is already qualified for the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2027 at the start of the tournament, the qualification spot shall be awarded, in order of priority, to the next highest-placed player (2nd, 3rd, etc.) who is not yet qualified, until a player accepts the spot.

2.3.4. The exact details to be confirmed by FIDE in consultations with Freestyle Chess Co. by April 30, 2026



#### 2.4. One (1) spot – Freestyle Friday Championship 2026 (Chess.com)

2.4.1. Event: The Freestyle Friday Championship 2026 shall consist of a series of online tournaments played on Chess.com between February 20, 2026, and December 18, 2026.

2.4.2. For each event, players finishing in 1st to 10th place shall be awarded points as follows:

- 1st place: 10 points; 2nd place: 7 points; 3rd place: 5 points; 4th 4 points; 5th 3 points; 6th 2 points; 7th 2 points; 8th 1 point; 9th 1 point; 10 th 1 point

2.4.3. The player who accumulates the highest total number of points across all events shall be declared the Freestyle Friday Champion 2026 and shall qualify. In the event of a tie, the player with the greater number of tournament wins shall prevail.

2.4.4. If this player withdraws or is already qualified for the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2027 at the conclusion of the series, the qualification spot shall be awarded, in order of priority, to the next highest-ranked player (2nd, 3rd, etc.) in the final series standings who is not yet qualified, until a player accepts the spot.

#### 2.5. One (1) spot – Online Tournament

2.6.1. Event: One online qualification tournament played between January 1 and January 15, 2027. The detailed regulations for this tournament shall be governed by the online platform.

2.6.2. Participation in this tournament shall be restricted to players who are not yet qualified for the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2027 at the start of the event.

2.6.3. The player finishing in 1st place in the final ranking list shall qualify.

2.6.4. If this player withdraws, the qualification spot shall be awarded, in order of priority, to the next highest-placed player (2nd, 3rd, etc.) who is not yet qualified, until a player accepts the spot.

### **3. Final Provisions**

3.1. The organiser of the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2027, in coordination with FIDE, reserves the right to resolve any unforeseen situations, ambiguities, or disputes not explicitly covered by these Regulations, provided that any such resolution is consistent with the sporting integrity and objectives of the competition.

3.2. FIDE retains the right to verify the eligibility of any player at any stage of the qualification process. Any decision regarding eligibility shall be final and binding.

3.3. In exceptional circumstances (including, but not limited to, force majeure, tournament cancellation, or significant changes to the international chess calendar), the organiser and FIDE may modify the qualification system or replace a qualification pathway with an alternative sporting criterion. Any such modification shall be communicated promptly and transparently.

3.4. Acceptance of a qualification spot constitutes full acceptance of these Regulations and of any additional regulations governing the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2027.

3.5. These Regulations enter into force on the date of publication.

(published January 30th, 2026)

# List of Games

| No. | White         | Black        | Events 2025 / 2026                        | Rd.  | Pos. | Sc. |
|-----|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------|------|------|-----|
| 1   | Nesterov      | Quilter      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss | 1.39 | 170  | 1-0 |
| 2   | Nielsen, P.H. | Kleiman      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss | 1.72 | 170  | 1-0 |
| 3   | Sowinski      | Lauda        | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss | 1.92 | 170  | 1-0 |
| 4   | Dvirnyy       | Svane, F.    | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss | 2.11 | 462  | 0-1 |
| 5   | Muradli       | Aradhya      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss | 2.23 | 462  | 1-0 |
| 6   | Puzyrevsky    | Paravyan     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss | 3.36 | 773  | 0-1 |
| 7   | Navara        | Skliarov     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss | 4.12 | 799  | 1-0 |
| 8   | Aravindh      | Biaotch      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss | 4.3  | 799  | 1-0 |
| 9   | Yoo           | Kilic        | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: Swiss | 9.2  | 732  | 1-0 |
| 10  | Fedoseev      | Sindarov     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: KO    | 4.2  | 807  | 1-0 |
| 11  | Sindarov      | Fedoseev     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus Play-In: KO    | 4.3  | 128  | ½   |
| 12  | Carlsen       | Nakamura     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 1.5  | 906  | 1-0 |
| 13  | Sindarov      | Aronian      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 2.1  | 55   | 1-0 |
| 14  | Nakamura      | Abdusattorov | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 2.2  | 55   | ½   |
| 15  | Gukesh        | Firouzja     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 2.3  | 55   | 0-1 |
| 16  | Keymer        | Fedoseev     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 2.4  | 55   | 1-0 |
| 17  | Caruana       | Carlsen      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 2.5  | 55   | 1-0 |
| 18  | Caruana       | Firouzja     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 4.4  | 200  | 1-0 |
| 19  | Carlsen       | Sindarov     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 5.3  | 836  | 0-1 |
| 20  | Carlsen       | Abdusattorov | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 6.2  | 588  | 1-0 |
| 21  | Firouzja      | Carlsen      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 7.4  | 789  | ½   |
| 22  | Aronian       | Fedoseev     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 7.5  | 789  | 0-1 |
| 23  | Firouzja      | Sindarov     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 9.2  | 931  | 1-0 |
| 24  | Nakamura      | Fedoseev     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 9.3  | 931  | 1-0 |
| 25  | Gukesh        | Carlsen      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus RR             | 9.5  | 931  | 0-1 |
| 26  | Aronian       | Fedoseev     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.1  | 381  | 1-0 |
| 27  | Carlsen       | Abdusattorov | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.1  | 381  | 1-0 |
| 28  | Gukesh        | Caruana      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.1  | 381  | 0-1 |
| 29  | Sindarov      | Nakamura     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.1  | 381  | ½   |
| 30  | Firouzja      | Keymer       | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.1  | 381  | 0-1 |
| 31  | Fedoseev      | Aronian      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.2  | 270  | ½   |
| 32  | Abdusattorov  | Carlsen      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.2  | 270  | 0-1 |
| 33  | Caruana       | Gukesh       | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.2  | 270  | 1-0 |
| 34  | Nakamura      | Sindarov     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.2  | 270  | ½   |
| 35  | Keymer        | Firouzja     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.2  | 270  | ½   |
| 36  | Nakamura      | Sindarov     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.3  | 942  | 0-1 |
| 37  | Sindarov      | Nakamura     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 1.4  | 336  | ½   |
| 38  | Nakamura      | Gukesh       | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.1  | 360  | ½   |
| 39  | Abdusattorov  | Firouzja     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.1  | 360  | ½   |
| 40  | Caruana       | Sindarov     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.1  | 360  | ½   |
| 41  | Keymer        | Carlsen      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.1  | 360  | 1-0 |
| 42  | Firouzja      | Abdusattorov | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.2  | 799  | 0-1 |
| 43  | Carlsen       | Keymer       | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.2  | 799  | ½   |
| 44  | Sindarov      | Caruana      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.2  | 799  | ½   |
| 45  | Sindarov      | Caruana      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO, Tiebreak   | 2.3  | 5    | ½   |
| 46  | Gukesh        | Nakamura     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.4  | 328  | 0-1 |
| 47  | Caruana       | Sindarov     | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.5  | 958  | 0-1 |
| 48  | Sindarov      | Caruana      | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO             | 2.6  | 339  | 0-1 |

## LIST OF GAMES

| No. | White           | Black           | Events 2025 / 2026                            | Rd.  | Pos. | Sc. |
|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|------|------|-----|
| 49  | Firouzja        | Gukesh          | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO                 | 3.1  | 866  | ½   |
| 50  | Abdusattorov    | Nakamura        | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO                 | 3.1  | 866  | 0-1 |
| 51  | Sindarov        | Carlsen         | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO                 | 3.1  | 866  | 0-1 |
| 52  | Keymer          | Caruana         | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO                 | 3.1  | 866  | 1-0 |
| 53  | Gukesh          | Firouzja        | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO                 | 3.2  | 909  | 0-1 |
| 54  | Nakamura        | Abdusattorov    | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO                 | 3.2  | 909  | 1-0 |
| 55  | Carlsen         | Sindarov        | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO                 | 3.2  | 909  | 1-0 |
| 56  | Caruana         | Keymer          | Grand Slam (I) Weissenhaus KO                 | 3.2  | 909  | ½   |
| 57  | Deviatkin       | Klepek          | Freestyle Friday Chess.com                    | 10   | 24   | 1-0 |
| 58  | Vitsiuk         | Daneshvar       | Grand Slam (II) Paris Play-In: Swiss Stage    | 1.48 | 747  | ½   |
| 59  | Yarikov         | Sammed Jaykumar | Grand Slam (II) Paris Play-In: Swiss Stage    | 1.64 | 747  | 0-1 |
| 60  | Nguyen          | Hakobyan        | Grand Slam (II) Paris Play-In: Swiss Stage    | 2.16 | 172  | 1-0 |
| 61  | Huschenbeth     | Erdogmus        | Grand Slam (II) Paris Play-In: Swiss Stage    | 2.29 | 172  | 0-1 |
| 62  | Carlsen         | Vidit           | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 1.2  | 828  | 1-0 |
| 63  | Vidit           | Gukesh          | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 2.5  | 591  | 1-0 |
| 64  | Gukesh          | Erigaisi        | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 3.2  | 751  | 1-0 |
| 65  | Abdusattorov    | Rapport         | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 3.6  | 751  | 1-0 |
| 66  | Nakamura        | Carlsen         | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 5.2  | 826  | 0-1 |
| 67  | Vachier Lagrave | Rapport         | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 6.2  | 60   | 1-0 |
| 68  | Rapport         | Vidit           | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 7.5  | 692  | 1-0 |
| 69  | Carlsen         | Abdusattorov    | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 8.4  | 636  | 1-0 |
| 70  | Keymer          | Nakamura        | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 9.2  | 667  | 1-0 |
| 71  | Abdusattorov    | Gukesh          | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 9.3  | 667  | 1-0 |
| 72  | Praggnanandhaa  | Keymer          | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 10.6 | 74   | 0-1 |
| 73  | Keymer          | Caruana         | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 11.1 | 384  | 1-0 |
| 74  | Rapport         | Nakamura        | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 11.3 | 384  | 0-1 |
| 75  | Nepomniachtchi  | Gukesh          | Grand Slam (II) Paris: RR                     | 11.4 | 384  | 1-0 |
| 76  | Carlsen         | Abdusattorov    | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 1.2  | 841  | 1-0 |
| 77  | Praggnanandhaa  | Vidit           | Grand Slam (II) Paris: 9th-12th place Playoff | 1.5  | 841  | 1-0 |
| 78  | Rapport         | Gukesh          | Grand Slam (II) Paris: 9th-12th place Playoff | 1.6  | 841  | 1-0 |
| 79  | Nepomniachtchi  | Keymer          | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 1.1  | 73   | ½   |
| 80  | Abdusattorov    | Carlsen         | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 1.2  | 73   | ½   |
| 81  | Caruana         | Vachier-Lagrave | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 1.3  | 73   | 1-0 |
| 82  | Nakamura        | Erigaisi        | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 1.4  | 73   | 1-0 |
| 83  | Erigaisi        | Nepomniachtchi  | Grand Slam (II) Paris: 5th-8th place Playoff  | 1.3  | 4    | 1-0 |
| 84  | Keymer          | Nakamura        | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 2.2  | 4    | 0-1 |
| 85  | Carlsen         | Caruana         | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 2.2  | 4    | 1-0 |
| 86  | Keymer          | Caruana         | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 3.1  | 103  | 0-1 |
| 87  | Carlsen         | Nakamura        | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 3.1  | 103  | 1-0 |
| 88  | Caruana         | Keymer          | Grand Slam (II) Paris: KO                     | 3.2  | 599  | ½   |
| 89  | Maisch          | Tabatabaei      | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 1.28 | 758  | 0-1 |
| 90  | Huschenbeth     | Germer          | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 1.43 | 758  | 0-1 |
| 91  | Assaubayeva     | Caruana         | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 2.3  | 130  | 0-1 |
| 92  | Carlsen         | Grandelius      | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 3.1  | 9    | 1-0 |
| 93  | Caruana         | Bacrot          | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 3.2  | 9    | 0-1 |
| 94  | Pranesh         | Robson          | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 3.13 | 9    | 1-0 |
| 95  | Mamedyarov      | Abergel         | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 3.26 | 9    | 0-1 |
| 96  | Leisch          | Keymer          | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 3.27 | 9    | 0-1 |
| 97  | Bacrot          | Carlsen         | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 4.1  | 302  | 0-1 |
| 98  | Livaic          | Bluebaum        | Gr. Slam (III) Karlsruhe: Freestyle Op.-A     | 4.18 | 302  | 0-1 |