

Dutch Dominance



Top-flight chess went ahead at the world's top tournament, the Tata Steel Masters, where the hosts didn't just show the way off the board. Yochanan Afek reports



The 83rd edition of the tournament nowadays known by the name of the local steelworks and current sponsor, Tata Steel, was held in the coastal Dutch holiday resort of Wijk aan Zee in the second half of January. As such, the tradition of this highly popular event was maintained: since 1938 there has been just a single interruption in 1945 – the year that ended the second world war. Due to the global pandemic and the consequent lockdowns, there was a serious danger of a second such interruption in 2021.

Tata Steel and the organising committee deserve much credit for putting up an alternative online festival for the hundreds of amateurs who normally gather each year at Wijk aan Zee. This included a mass simul against masters, rapid and bullet competitions, and, above all, there was still a real crown super-tournament in Wijk aan Zee.

In accordance with Dutch lockdown regulations, no spectators were allowed in the venue, just the players and the same two regular arbiters of the event: the Czech Pavel Votruba and Dr. Alex Rose from Aruba, who also acted as the tournament doctor. All familiar steps were taken to secure the safety

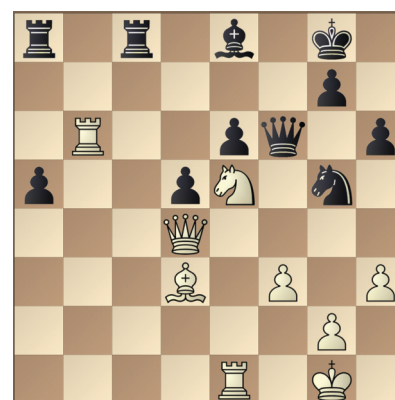
and health of the participants, including several Covid-19 tests throughout the tournament.

An attractive line-up of 14 young grandmasters, led by Magnus Carlsen, Fabiano Caruana and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, produced a Category 19 event with an Elo average of 2725. The home representatives were 26-year-old Anish Giri and Jorden van Foreest, who is only 21. The eldest participant was Indian Pentala Harikrishna at just 34 years of age, while the youngest were the 17-year-old Alireza Firouzja, playing under the FIDE flag, and the 18-year-old Russian Andrey Esipenko. There was a last-minute switch when Daniil Dubov had to withdraw after someone close to him tested positive for Covid, and the German no.2 Alexander Donchenko unsurprisingly proved unable to turn down such an opportunity despite the short notice.

Carlsen, who has attended the festival since 2004, was obviously a natural favourite and his first-round victory against his youngest and most ambitious opponent signalled that the world champion meant business.

M. Carlsen – A. Firouzja

Round 1



White's attacking efforts have cost him two pawns in return for some practical chances on the kingside.

32 ♖e3 a4?

Ignoring his opponent's intentions, Black wastes a precious tempo on the other side. The world champion now grabs his opportunity and is pretty much back in the

game. Instead, 32...♙d8 threatening 33...d4 was one superior option.

33 ♖g4! ♙d8 34 ♜xc6!

An interesting alternative is 34 h4!? d4! 35 ♗f4 ♖h3+! when play might run 36 gxh3 ♗xb6 37 ♗e4 ♙d6 38 ♗h7+ ♖f8 39 ♗h8+ ♖f7 40 ♖e5+ ♖f6 41 ♖g4+ ♖f7 42 ♖e5+ ♖e7 43 ♗xg7+ ♖d8 44 ♖c4 ♜xc4 45 ♖xc4 with equal chances.

34...♖xe6 35 ♗xe6+



35...♖f7?

Black fails to withstand the pressure and blunders. After 35...♖h8 36 ♖xh6! ♖h5 37 ♖g4 ♗h4 38 ♜e5! White only has enough play to draw: for example, 38...♜e8 39 ♗xd5 ♜xe5 40 ♗xa8+ ♖e8 41 ♖xe5 ♗e1+ 42 ♖h2 ♗xe5+ 43 ♖h1 and perpetual check is the most likely result.

36 ♖xh6+! gxh6 37 ♗xh6 ♗c7

Black is helpless, as 37...♜a7 and 37...♜c7 fail to the rook lift 38 ♜e5.

38 ♗h7+ ♖f8 39 ♗h8+ ♖g8 40 ♗h6+ 1-0

Black's king is led to the scaffold following 40...♖f7 (or 40...♗g7 41 ♙d6+ ♗e7 42 ♗xe7#) 41 ♖g6+ ♖f6 42 ♖e8+ ♖f5 43 g4#.

Another pre-tournament favourite was Fabiano Caruana, the first to arrive in the village 10 days beforehand and eager to defend his impressive title from 2020 when he amassed a huge 10/13 to finish two points ahead of Carlsen. This year too Caruana had a promising start. In the third round he played an excellent game which he spoiled towards the time control.

F.Caruana-J.K.Duda

Round 3

Petroff Defence

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖f6 3 ♖xe5 d6 4 ♖f3 ♖xe4 5 ♖c3 ♖xc3 6 dxc3 ♖e7 7 ♖e3 ♖d7 8 ♙d2 0-0 9 0-0 10 ♖f6 10 ♖d3 c5 11 ♜hg1!?

While 11 ♜he1 seems the natural, quiet Russian plan here, White instead shows that he means business on the kingside.

11...b5

Accepting the challenge. We are ready for an exciting battle of opposite-wing attacks.

12 g4 ♖b7 13 ♗e2 c4 14 ♖f5 ♜e8

The early offer is declined. Following 14...g6 15 ♖g5 gxf5? 16 gxf5 ♖h8 17 ♖d4 ♙d7 18 ♗g4! the threat of 19 ♗h3 is decisive.

15 ♖d4 ♖d5 16 ♖e6! ♗a5

Naturally turning down the second 'quiet' gift in favour of various sharp counter-threats.

17 ♗f3!



The best form of defence is, once again, to attack, thereby allowing the opponent various options to go wrong.

17...♖f6?

Losing, but the alternatives are not fun either: 17...♖xe3? is met by 18 ♖xh7+! ♖xh7 19 ♗xf7 ♖f6 20 ♜g3 ♖g2 21 g5, which wins, and even 17...♖xc3! 18 ♗xb7 ♖xa2+ 19 ♖b1 ♖b4 (19...fxe6 loses to 20 ♖xh7+! ♖xh7 21 ♗e4+ ♖h8 22 ♜g3) 20 ♖c7 ♜eb8 21 ♗f3 ♗xc7 22 ♖xh7+! ♖xh7 23 ♗xf7 favours White.

18 g5! ♖xc3 19 ♖xh7+! ♖xh7 20 g6+! fxg6 21 ♖g5+ ♖h8



22 ♖d4!!

Calmly neutralising all Black's counterplay before continuing his own attack.

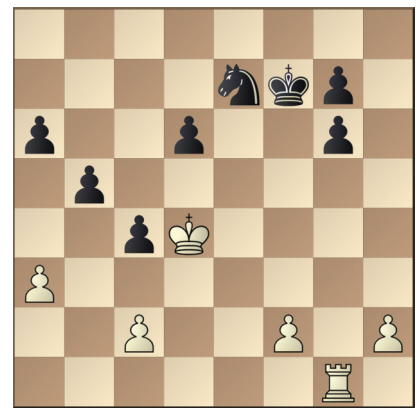
22...♖xd4 23 ♜xd4 ♖f6

Black is apparently already defenceless: for example, 23...♜e1+ 24 ♜e1 ♗xe1+ 25 ♜d1 ♗e8 26 ♗h3+ ♖g8 27 ♗h7+ ♖f8 28 ♗h8+ ♖e7 29 ♗xg7+ ♖d8 30 ♗xb7 wins.

24 ♗xb7 ♜ab8 25 ♗f7 ♜e1+ 26 ♜d1 ♜xg1 27 ♜xg1 ♜e8 28 ♖e6 ♖xe6 29 ♗xe6 ♗xa2 30 ♗h3+ ♖g8 31 ♗e6+ ♖h7 32 ♗h3+ ♖g8 33 ♗a3

Exchanging to win the endgame, but Caruana was by now a little short of time.

33...♗xa3 34 bxa3 ♖f7 35 ♖d2 a6 36 ♖e3 ♖d5+ 37 ♖d4 ♖e7



38 ♜e1?

Correct is 38 a4! ♖e6 39 axb5 axb5 40 ♜b1 ♖f5+ 41 ♖c3, winning the b-pawn and subsequently the game. Instead, White allows Black a vital tempo to protect this vulnerable pawn.

38...♖e8! 39 a4 ♖d7 40 axb5 axb5 41 ♜g1 ♖c6 42 h4?!

Not a great move, but there was no longer a win in any case.

42...♖f5+ 43 ♖c3 ♖xh4 44 ♖b4 ♖f3 45 ♜xg6 ♖d4 46 c3 ♖e2 47 ♜xg7 ♖f4 48 ♖a5 ♖e2 49 ♖b4 ♖f4 50 ♖a5 ♖e2 51 ♖b4 ½-½

Such a pity to spoil such perfection by just one single hasty move.

The fourth round brought together two youngsters of Iranian roots: Aryan Tari was born in Norway to Iranian parents, while Alireza Firouzja left Iran and lives now in France.

A.Tari-A.Firouzja

Round 4

Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♖f5 4 ♖f3 e6 5 ♖e2 ♖e7 6 c3 ♖g6 7 0-0 ♖d7 8 ♖e1 h5 9 ♖e3 ♗b6 10 b3 f6 11 ♖xh5 fxe5 12 g4!?

This forces the opponent to sacrifice the exchange and yet 12 dxe5 ♗c7 13 f4 0-0-0 14 ♖xg6 ♖xg6 15 b4 was a better course.

12...♜xh5 13 gxh5 ♖f4 14 dxe5 ♖h3+ 15 ♖g2 c5 16 f4 ♗c6 17 ♖f3 0-0-0 18 ♖bd2 ♖b6



19 ♗e1

The unpinning 19 ♖g3! was the right way

to a white advantage after 19...♙e7 (19...d4? 20 cxd4 ♖d5 21 ♖c4 ♖c3! 22 ♖e1 ♖e4+ 23 ♖g2 wins) 20 ♖c1 ♖b8 21 ♖g5.

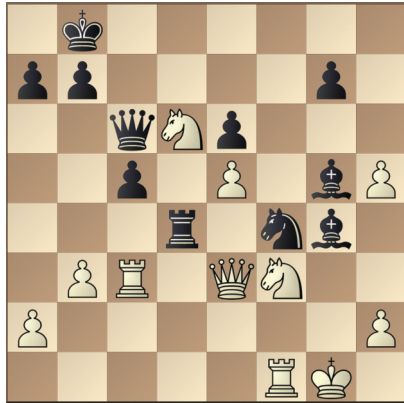
19...♙e7 20 ♖c1 d4! 21 cxd4 ♖d5 22 ♖c4?

And here 22 ♖h1! was better.

22...♖dx4+ 23 ♙xf4 ♖xf4+ 24 ♖g1 ♙g4?

Commencing a sequence of serious mutual blunders. Correct was 24...♖xd4! 25 ♖d6+ ♙xd6 26 exd6 ♖h3+ 27 ♖h1 ♙e4 28 ♖g3 ♖g5 29 ♖c3 ♖xf3 30 ♖xf3 ♙xf3+ 31 ♖xf3 ♖d3, which should be winning for Black.

25 ♖c3 ♖xd4 26 ♖d6+ ♖b8 27 ♖e3 ♙g5



28 ♖xc5??

Now 28 ♖h1! is nearly winning for White after 28...♙h3 29 ♖xd4 ♙g2+ 30 ♖g1 ♖e2+ 31 ♖xg2 ♖xd4 32 b4.

28...♖xc5 29 ♖xg5 ♖e2+??

It's Black's turn to blunder last, missing the aesthetic 29...♙e2! when 30 ♖e1 ♖d1! 31 ♖xc5 ♖xe1+ 32 ♖f2 ♖d3+ wins and 30 ♖xf4 ♖d1+ 31 ♖f2 ♖f1+ 32 ♖xe2 ♖e1+ 33 ♖xe1 ♖xe3+ also finishes White off.

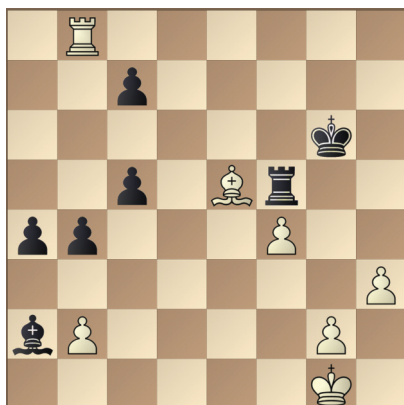
30 ♖g2 ½-½

A comedy of time scramble errors ends up with rough equality.

Fighting chess, even at the highest level, is naturally not error-free and Wijk aan Zee was no exception. The following game displays mutual instructive blunders of the kind that might comfort us all.

D.Anton Guijarro-A.Tari

Round 5



At the start of the battle between two of the outsiders, David Anton and Aryan Tari, few could have predicted that the resulting endgame would bring such drama and a missed win.

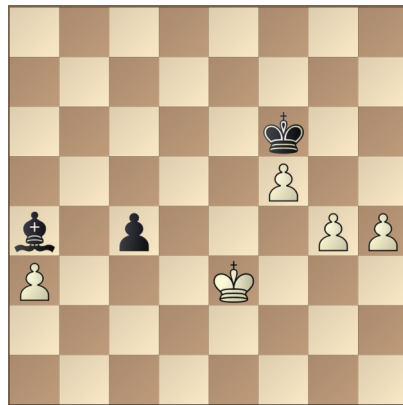
White has obtained a winning ending. Nevertheless, he should not ignore his opponent's threats on the queenside and just before the time control he errs terribly.

39 ♖b5??

Correct was the prophylactic 39 ♖f2 b3 40 ♖e3 c4 41 ♖d4 a3 42 ♖c3 and only now, after successfully neutralising all the counter-threats, is White's connected passed kingside trio ready to march on.

39...b3! 40 ♖xc5 ♖xe5! 41 ♖xe5 a3 42 bxa3 b2 43 ♖b5 b1♖+ 44 ♖xb1 ♙xb1 45 ♖f2

White should now be happy with a draw. **45...♙c2 46 g4 c5 47 ♖e3 ♖f6 48 ♖d2 ♙a4 49 h4 ♙d7 50 f5 ♙a4 51 ♖e3 c4**



Refusing to recognise his failure, White commits a fatal error.

52 ♖f4?? c3! 53 g5+ ♖f7 54 ♖e3

All of a sudden White is in zugzwang and after 54...♙b5! will soon run out of moves, but the drama is not yet over.

54...c2??

Miraculous salvation for the Spanish Grandmaster. Black wins effortlessly just by waiting moves: 54...♙b5! 55 a4 (or 55 f6 ♙f1 56 a4 ♖g6 57 h5+ ♖f7) 55...♙c4 56 a5 ♙a6 57 f6 ♙b5 58 h5 ♙a6 59 h6 ♖g6 60 f7 ♖xf7 61 h7 ♖g7 62 g6 ♙b5 and it's game over.

55 ♖d2 ♖g7 56 h5 ♙b3 57 ♖c1 ♙a4 58 ♖b2 ♙b3 59 ♖c1 ♙a4 60 ♖b2 ½-½

Thanks to his extra king moves White is safe and the point is finally split.

The early leader was Nils Grandelius, who reached 4/6 after defeating Vachier-Lagrave, which left the Swedish no.1 a half-point ahead of Harikrishna, van Foreest, Caruana, Carlsen, Giri and Firouzja. Van Foreest joined the chasing pack thanks to his win against the Spanish no.1.

J.Van Foreest-D.Anton Guijarro

Round 6

Ruy Lopez

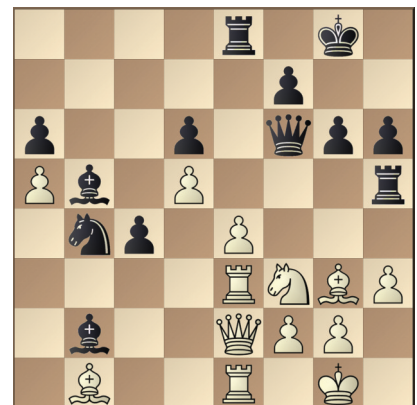
1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♖f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 d3 b5 7 ♙b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 h6 10 a4 ♙d7 11 ♙c2 b4 12 ♖bd2 ♖e8 13 a5 ♙f8 14 ♖e1 ♖b8 15 d4

Abandoning control of the key square b4. First going 15 ♖c4 was a more prophylactic and superior choice.

15...bxc3 16 bxc3 exd4 17 cxd4 ♖b4 18 ♙b1 g6?! 19 ♖a3

Seizing space with the immediate 19 e5 followed by ♖e4 was also a very logical option.

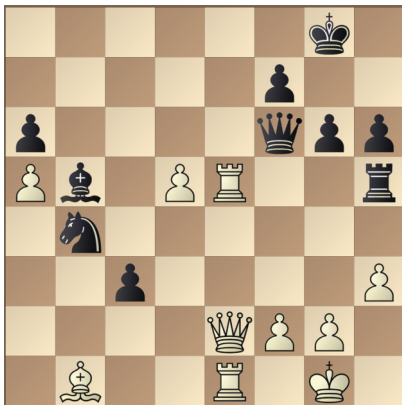
19...♙g7 20 ♖f1 ♖b5 21 ♖g3 ♖h5 22 ♖xh5 ♖xh5 23 d5 c5 24 ♙f4 ♙b2 25 ♖ae3 ♖f6 26 ♙g3 c4 27 ♖e2 ♙b5



28 e5!

Having this highly promising move at hand, White declines an eye-catching opportunity: 28 ♙xd6! c3 (28...♖xd6 29 ♖xb2 wins) 29 ♖xb5!! axb5 30 ♙xb4 with an overwhelming positional advantage in all variations, as shown by 30...♖c8 31 e5 ♖d8

32 e6 ♖xd5 33 exf7+ ♜xf7 34 ♙c2 ♜f6 35 ♖e7+ ♜g8 36 a6 ♜xa6 37 ♖7e6 ♜xe6 38 ♖xe6 ♖c4 39 ♖xg6+ ♜f7 40 ♖g4 and wins.
28...♙xe5
 28...dxe5 is obviously met by 29 ♜xb2.
29 ♜xe5 dxe5 30 ♙xe5 ♖exe5 31 ♖xe5 c3



32 ♜e3!
 The only winning move. The alternatives fail, including 32 ♜e4? c2 33 ♖xh5 ♜d3! 34 ♙xc2 (and not 34 ♖f1? ♜xf2+!) 34...♜xf2+ 35 ♜h2 ♜xe1 36 ♖xh6 ♜xg2! 37 ♖xg6+ fxg6 38 ♜xg6+ ♜f8, which is only a draw.
32...c2

Alternatively, 32...♜xe5 33 ♜xe5 ♖xe5 34 ♖xe5 f6 35 ♖e7 c2 36 ♙xc2 ♜xc2 37 d6 ♜f8 38 ♖e6 ♜f7 39 d7! ♙xd7 40 ♖xa6 and wins.
33 ♖xh5 gxh5 34 ♙xc2 ♜xc2 35 ♜e5 ♜g7 36 ♖e4 ♙d3 37 ♜g3+ 1-0

The seventh round already saw a change of leaders in the clubhouse.

A.Giri-N.Grandelius
 Round 7
Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 a6 6 f3 e5 7 ♜b3 ♙e6 8 ♙e3 ♙e7 9 ♜d2 h5
 Fighting for space against White's traditional g2-g4 advance.
10 ♜d5 ♜xd5 11 exd5 ♙f5 12 ♙e2 a5 13 a4 0-0 14 0-0 ♜d7 15 f4 exf4 16 ♙xf4 ♖c8 17 c3 ♜f6



18 ♙e3



Partly due to crushing Jan-Krzysztof Duda with the black pieces in round 2 and then also Vachier-Lagrave's Najdorf no less, Nils Grandelius was the early leader at the Tata Steel Masters.

The natural alternative 18 ♜d4!? seeks a tactical kingside attack, but after 18...♙g6 (18...♙e4 19 c4 should be an edge for White) 19 ♙f3 ♜e4 20 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 21 ♖ae1 ♙xd5 (critical and superior to 21...♙g6 22 b3, which favours White somewhat) 22 ♖xe7! ♜xe7 23 ♜f5 ♜d7 24 ♜xg7! ♜g4 25 ♜xd5 ♜xg7 26 ♜xh5 ♖c5 27 ♜e2 ♖f5 Black maintains equality.

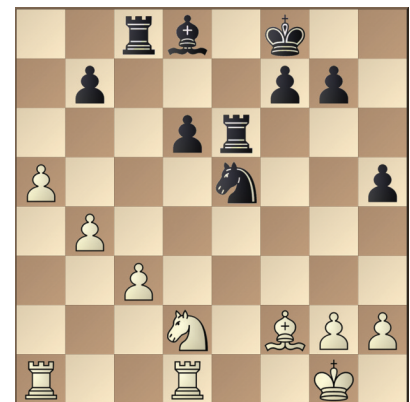
18...♙e4 19 ♙d4!
 Giving away the pawn seems more promising than protecting it. After 19 c4 ♜g4 20 ♙xg4 hxg4 21 ♜xa5 ♜d7 22 ♜b4 f5 Black's bishop-pair supplies sufficient compensation for the pawn.
19...♜xd5 20 ♙f3

After 20 ♙xh5 ♜f6 21 ♙e2 d5 White is slightly better thanks to Black's IQP.
20...♙g5 21 ♜e2 ♙xf3 22 ♜xf3 ♜f6 23 ♜f5! ♜g4 24 ♜xa5 ♖e8 25 ♜xd8 ♙xd8

25...♖cxd8 26 ♜a5 ♜e3 27 ♖f2 ♖d7 28 b4 ♜g4 29 ♖f3 ♜e5 30 ♖ff1 is probably a little better for White.
26 ♖fe1 ♜e5 27 ♜d2 ♖e6 28 ♖ed1 ♜f8 29 b4 ♜c6 30 ♙f2

30 ♜b3 ♜xd4 31 ♜xd4 ♖e3 32 ♜b5 ♙f6 33 a5 ♙e5 is pretty much equal too.
30...♜e5?!

30...♙f6! 31 ♖a3 ♜e7! 32 c4 ♜c6! 33 b5 (or 33 ♖b3 ♜d4) 33...♜a5 was the subtle saving manoeuvre against the queenside pawn majority.
31 a5!



31...♖xc3?
 A poisoned pawn! After 31...♜g4! 32 ♙d4 ♜e3! Black seems to be OK.

32 b5 ♜g4 33 ♙d4 ♖d3 34 ♜c4 ♖xd4
 The alternative 34...♖xd1+ 35 ♖xd1 d5 should also be handled with the utmost accuracy by White: 36 ♜b6 ♜e8 37 ♖a1 ♙xb6 38 ♙xb6 ♜d7 39 ♖c1! ♖e4 40 h3 ♜e5 41 ♖c7+ ♜d6 42 ♖xb7 d4 43 a6 d3 44 ♙a5 ♖a4 45 ♙c7+ ♜e6 46 ♖b6+ ♜f5 47 ♖d6 and only now does it become apparent that he is definitely winning.
35 ♖xd4 ♙f6 36 ♖dd1 d5

After 36...♙xa1 37 ♖xa1 ♜e5 38 ♜b6! the passed pawn would cost Black his knight.
37 ♜b6 ♜e3?

A time-trouble blunder, though 37...♙xa1 38 ♖xa1 ♜e5 39 ♜xd5 doesn't change the result.

38 ♖d7+ ♜e7 39 ♖xf6 1-0

Following this key victory Giri now shared the lead with Caruana, van Foreest and Firouzja on 4½/7.

Round eight turned to be the hour of the teenagers. Firouzja followed up victories over Donchenko and Duda to score his third win in a row against Harikrishna to seize the sole lead. Nevertheless, the highlight of the round was undoubtedly the following upset.

A.Esipenko-M.Carlsen
Round 8
Sicilian Scheveningen

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 a6 6 ♙e2 e6 7 ♙e3 ♙e7 8 g4 b5 9 g5 ♖fd7 10 a3 ♙xg5 11 ♖d2 ♙xe3

The game Ivanchuk-Negi, Greek Team Championship 2010, saw instead 11...♙f6 12 0-0-0 ♙b7 13 ♖hg1 ♖c5 14 e5! ♙xe5 (14...dxe5 15 ♖dxb5!) 15 ♖dxb5! ♖b3+ (or 15...axb5 16 ♙xc5 ♖c6 17 ♙xd6 ♙xd6 18 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 19 ♖xd6 b4 20 axb4 ♖xb4 21 ♖b6 ♖a1+ 22 ♖d2 ♖xg1 23 ♖xb7 with a decisive double threat) 16 cxb3 axb5 17 ♙xb5+ ♙c6 18 ♙d4 ♖c8 19 ♙xe5 dxe5 20 ♖b1 ♖g8 21 ♖e4 and Black called it a day.

12 ♖xe3 ♖h4

Losing precious time, time which might cost Black dearly. Following 12...♙b7 13 0-0-0 ♖e7 14 h4 ♖f6 15 ♖hg1 g6 16 f4 ♖bd7 17 e5 White's piece activity and space advantage seem sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

13 ♖g1 g6 14 0-0-0 ♖e7



Regretting the premature exit and allowing White a lasting initiative.

15 f4

A serious alternative was to exploit Black's lack of development by the immediate 15 e5! d5 (alternatively, if 15...dxe5 16 ♙f3! exd4 17 ♖xd4 e5 18 ♖e3 e4 19 ♖d5 or 15...♖xe5 16 f4 ♖c4 17 ♙xc4 bxc4 18 f5!, winning in both cases) 16 f4 ♙b7 17 f5! ♖c6 (17...gxf5 fails to 18 ♙f3 ♖c6 19 ♖xf5!) 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 ♖xe6! ♖xe6 20 ♙g4 with a devastating attack.

15...♙b7 16 ♖b1 ♖c6?

It's already difficult to offer better advice. The lesser evil might be 16...♖c5 17 ♙f3 ♖bd7.

17 ♖cxb5! axb5 18 ♖xc6 ♙xc6 19 ♖c3!



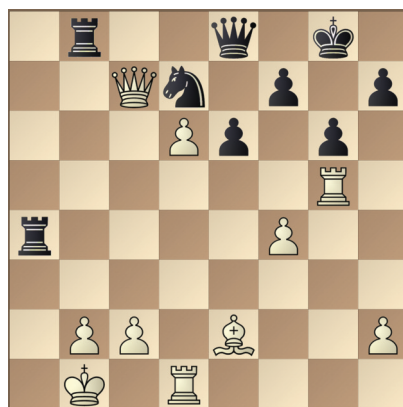
Magnus Carlsen was quickly in the tank against Andrey Esipenko and quickly in trouble. The world champion was far from his usual lofty best back playing over the board at Wijk aan Zee.

A lethal fork.

19...0-0 20 ♖xc6 d5 21 exd5 ♖fc8 22 d6 ♖d8 23 ♖xb5 ♖cb8 24 ♖c4 ♖xa3 25 ♖c7!

The open queenside files hardly provide sufficient counterplay against White's proud, extra central passed pawn.

25...♖e8 26 ♖g5 ♖a4!



A desperate if devious trap. The tempting 27 ♙b5? is now met by 27...♖xb5! 28 ♖xb5 ♖a8 29 ♖c1 ♖a1+ 30 ♖d2 ♖g2+ 31 ♖c3 ♖xd1 32 ♖xd7 ♖g7!, which favours Black.

27 ♖a5! ♖ab4 28 b3

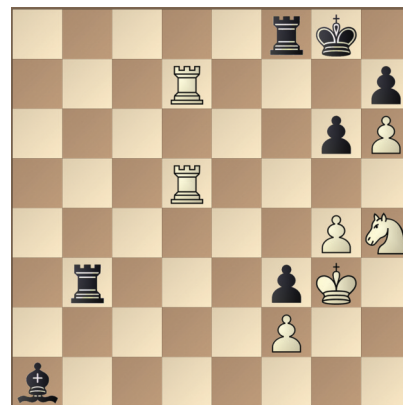
The rest leaves Black no hope.

28...♖ab7 29 ♖c3 ♖d8 30 ♙f3 ♖b4 31 ♖c7 ♖f6 32 ♖a8 ♖xa8 33 ♙xa8 ♖f5 34 ♖b2 ♖b5 35 ♖xd7 ♖c5 36 ♖c1 ♖xf4

37 ♖e8+ ♖g7 38 d7 1-0

Towards the final weekend, Giri scored a crucial win against Anand's former second.

A.Giri-R.Wojtaszek
Round 10



Thus far the game hasn't been too exciting, but a twist in its plot is now unexpectedly witnessed.

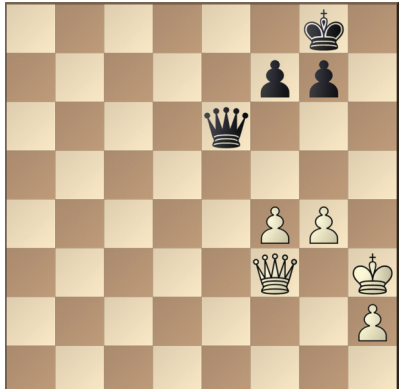
48 g5! ♙b2?? 48...♖f7 was absolutely the only defence: for instance, 49 ♖7d6 ♖e7 50 ♖a6 ♙e5+ 51 ♖h3 ♖f7 when Black seems to hold. However, Wojtaszek had overlooked Giri's shocking response.

49 ♖xh7!! 1-0

Black laid his arms down with no further delay as the forced follow-up 49...♗xh7 50 ♖d7+ ♜f7 (if 50...♗g8 51 h7+ ♗h8 52 ♖xg6#) 51 ♜xf7+ ♗g8 52 ♜e7 ♜b6 53 ♗xf3 leaves him without hope.

That beautiful swindle earned the Dutchman his turn as sole leader, while the match-up between the two most disappointed players in the field reached the following queen ending.

M.Vachier-Lagrave-A.Donchenko
Round 10



Black is a pawn behind, but as all pawns are on the same side of the board, with no structural weaknesses, he should comfortably hold by just not trying to force matters. Out-of-form players sometimes have different ideas though.

55...f5?!

An unnecessary weakening of the pawn structure.

56 g5 ♖e1

56...♗f7 is one of several ways to avoid White's annoying next move.

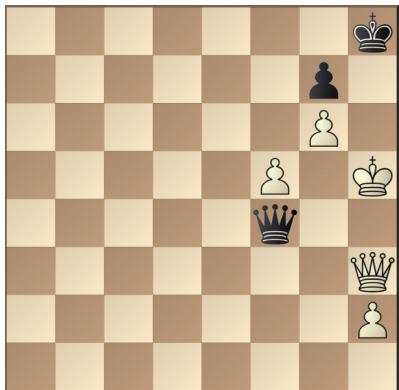
57 g6!

All of a sudden the king on the eighth rank is threatened.

57...♜e8??

This panicked retreat in time pressure loses a pawn and the game. 57...♗f8 was the only move after which Black should still hold.

58 ♜d5+ ♗h8 59 ♜xf5 ♜e3+ 60 ♗h4 ♜e1+ 61 ♗h5 ♜e2+ 62 ♜g4 ♜e6 63 f5 ♜e5 64 ♜h3 ♜f4



Unexpectedly White seems to have been trapped in zugzwang, but for...

65 f6! 1-0

...This. White resumes the threat to Black's back rank to force a queen exchange followed by an easily winning pawn ending.

The pivotal games of round 11, Carlsen-Giri and Firouzja-Caruana, ended up drawn, while van Foreest defeated Harikrishna and Esipenko suffered his only defeat of the tournament at the hands of Tari.

A.Tari-A.Esipenko
Round 11
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♖b5 a6 4 ♖a4 d6 5 0-0 ♗f6 6 ♜e1 ♖d7 7 c3 g6 8 d4 ♖g7 9 ♗bd2 0-0 10 ♖c2 ♗h5 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♗f1 ♗f4 13 ♗e3 ♗h8 14 ♗d5 ♗e6 15 h4 h5?! 15...f5 is Black's natural counter. 16 ♖e3 f6 17 b4 ♗e7 18 ♜e2 ♗c8 19 c4 ♜e8 20 c5 a5 21 a3 ♗a7 22 ♖b3 ♗b5



23 ♖c4

A lot stronger was 23 a4! ♗bd4 24 ♖xd4 exd4 (24...♗xd4 25 ♗xd4 exd4 26 ♗xc7 wins) 25 ♜d2 axb4 26 e5! fxe5 27 ♗xe5 ♗xc5 28 ♖c2, which is crushing.

23...axb4 24 axb4 ♜xa1?

Black will soon need his rook to protect the eighth rank, so correct was 24...♗d8 even though after 25 ♜e1 ♖c6 26 ♜f1 White is better.

25 ♜xa1 f5?

Desperately seeking active counterplay, Black creates incurable weaknesses on the kingside.

26 exf5 gxf5 27 ♗g5! ♗xg5 28 hxg5 f4



29 ♜a8!!

This devastating tactical blow against the overloaded queen is the result of the hasty exchange on move 24. White attacks on both sides of the board.

29...♜g6

29...♜xa8 naturally fails to 30 ♜xh5+ and mates, while after 29...f3 30 ♜xe8 fxe2 31 ♜xf8+ ♖xf8 32 ♖xe2 Black is about to lose a second pawn in a hopeless ending.

30 ♜xf8+ ♖xf8 31 ♖d2

31 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 32 ♜xb5 fxe3 33 ♗xe3 was at least as convincing.

31...♗a3 32 ♖d3 ♜xg5 33 ♜e4 1-0

Following 33...♜g7 34 ♖c3 it's game over.

That all meant that Anish Giri led alone on 7½/11, half a point ahead of Caruana, Firouzja and van Foreest. Round 12 saw all the candidates for the top honours adding just half a point each to their scores and thus leaving everything to play for, although Giri should really have managed to bury the ball in the back of the net against Firouzja, who eventually managed to save an endgame with rook and knight against the leader's rook and four pawns.

A typically tense final round saw Giri struggling against Anton Guijarro, but eventually rescuing a draw. Firouzja-Wojtaszek and Tari-Caruana were drawn as well, but not the remaining game involving one of the chasing pack.

J.Van Foreest-N.Grandelius
Round 13
Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♜d3

An extremely rare line which was previously tried, rather unsuccessfully, by 14-year-old Jorden in the last round of the 2014 Dutch Open against Bart van Meijenfed. Before this game this surprise line was better prepared with the help of Jorden's second and good friend, the Netherlands' newest GM Max Warmerdam.

6...♗bd7 7 ♖e2 b5 8 a4!? ♗c5 9 ♜e3 b4

9...♗xa4? is met by 10 ♗dxb5! ♗b6 11 e5! ♗g4 12 ♖xg4 ♖xg4 13 ♗d4 dxe5 14 ♜xe5 and Black is behind in development.

10 ♗d5 ♗cxe4 11 a5!



Creating a strong outpost on b6.

11...♗xd5 12 ♜xe4 e6 13 0-0 ♖d7

Black might have disliked the uncastled

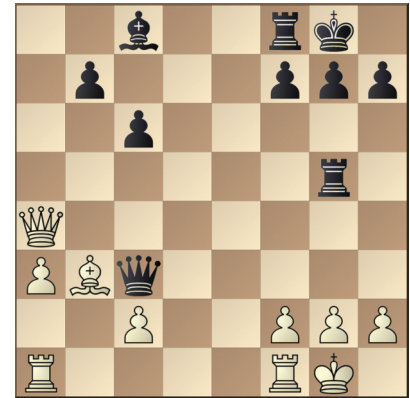


Jorden van Foreest may have been a surprise winner of such a strong event, but he was also a most worthy one. He remained unbeaten, while picking off four opponents - and in some style.

J. Van Foreest-A.Giri
Wijk aan Zee (blitz) 2021
Bishop's Opening

1 e4 e5 2 ♘c4 ♘f6 3 d3 c6 4 ♘f3 d5
5 ♘b3 a5 6 ♘c3 ♘b4 7 a3 ♘xc3+ 8 bxc3
a4 9 ♘a2 dxe4 10 ♘xe5 0-0 11 0-0
♖e7 12 d4 ♘bd7 13 ♘f4

13 f4 looks more promising.
13...♘d5 14 ♖d2 ♘xf4 15 ♖xf4 ♘e5
16 dxe5 ♖a5 17 ♖xe4 ♖xe5 18 ♖b4
♖b5 19 ♖xa4 ♖xc3 20 ♘b3 ♖g5!



position following 13...♘b7 14 c4 bxc3 15
♘d1! ♘e7 16 ♘a4+ ♘f8 17 bxc3.
14 ♘d2 ♘e7 15 ♘f3 0-0 16 ♖d3 ♖b8
17 c4! bxc3 18 bxc3 ♖a7?

Here Black misses a chance to put up
better resistance. The counter-sacrifice
18...♘f6!? 19 c4 ♘b4 20 ♘xb4 ♖xb4 21
♘xa8 ♖xa8 seems necessary, although after
22 ♖fb1 ♖c5 23 ♘b3 ♖c7 24 ♖a2 White
still has an edge.
19 ♖fb1 ♖c8 20 c4 ♘f6

The Swedish Grandmaster misses miss a
dream opportunity to save the day by the
remarkable possibility of 28...♘c5! 29 ♖b6
♖d7! when after 30 g3 ♘xa6! 31 ♖xa6
♖xa6 32 ♘xa6 ♖a8 the position looks more
drawish than anything else.
29 ♘d6 ♖d8 30 ♖c1 g6 31 h3 ♖e8 32
♖c7 ♘f6 33 ♘e5 ♘e4 34 ♖c6 ♖f8 35
♘d4 ♖b8 36 f3 ♖xa6 37 ♘xa6 ♖b4 38
♘e5 ♖e1+ 39 ♘h2 ♘f2 40 ♖c3 ♖h1+
41 ♘g3 ♖g1 42 ♖c8 ♘h1+ 43 ♘h4

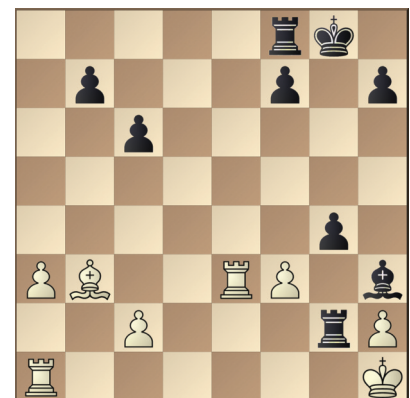
21 ♖fe1?
After 21 ♖f4 ♖g4 22 ♖e3 ♖xe3 23 fxe3
♖e4 24 ♖ad1 ♖e7 Black is just slightly better
owing to his superior structure.

21...♘h3!?
This should have been sufficient, but more
practical at such a time control was 21...♖h3!
22 ♖e4 ♘f5 23 ♖e3 ♘xe4 24 ♘h3 ♖xg2+
25 ♘f1 ♖g4 26 ♖e3 ♖f4! when Black is a
pawn up and with the superior pawn formation.

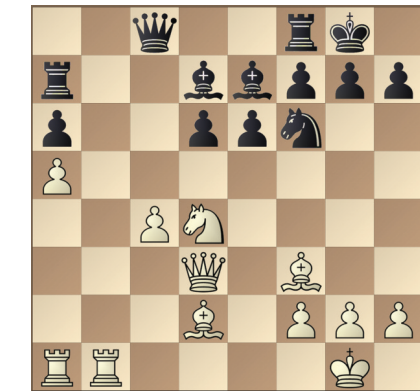
22 ♖f4!
The queen returns to the battlefield,
threatening both the rook on g5 and all of a
sudden mate after 23 ♖xf7+!

22...♖xg2+ 23 ♘h1 g5!
Defence and attack. This powerful blow is
not just the only way to play for a win, but
also to avoid losing, i.e. 23...h6? 24 ♖e3!
♖xe3 25 ♖xe3 when White wins.

24 ♖e3 ♖xe3 25 ♖xe3 g4 26 f3



26...h5?
Missing his best opportunity to take the
tiebreak by 26...g3! 27 hxg3 ♖d8! 28 ♖d3
♖e8 29 ♖g1 ♖f2 when Black should be winning.
27 fxg4 hxg4 28 ♖g1! ♖xg1+ 29 ♘g1
♖d8 30 ♖e7 ♖d1+ 31 ♘f2 ♖f1+ 32 ♘g3!

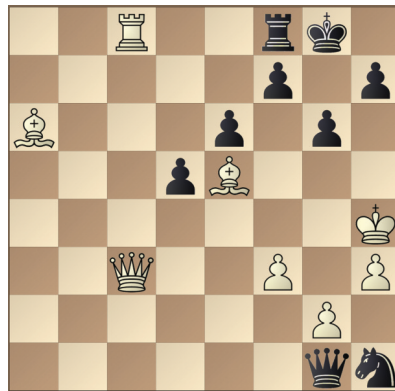


21 ♘b5!!
Jorden doesn't miss the opportunity to
win the tournament in grand style.

21...axb5 22 cxb5 ♘xb5
The pawn pair absolutely must be stopped
and 22...♘d5 23 ♘xd5 exd5 24 b6 ♘f5 25
♖b5 ♘xb1 26 ♖xb1 ♖a8 (if 26...♖d7 27 a6)
27 b7 ♖c2 28 bxa8 ♖xa8 29 ♖b7 ♖f8 30
♘f4 is hardly any better.
23 ♖xb5 ♘d7 24 ♘b7 ♖d8 25 a6 ♘f6
26 ♘a5 ♖e8 27 ♘c7!?

Though White is winning anyway, he really
should have moved the attacked rook first.
27...♘xa1 28 ♖xa1?

This automatic recapture might have cost
Jorden victory. Correct was 28 ♘xd6! ♘e5
29 ♘xf8 ♘xf8 30 ♖d1! (30 ♖c1 ♘e7 31
♖c8 ♖xc8 32 ♘xc8 ♖c7 33 g3 ♖xc8 34 a7
seems more difficult to convert) 30...♘e7 31
♖b4+ ♘f6 32 ♖h4+ g5 (32...♘g6 33 f4!
wins) 33 ♖h6+ ♘e7 34 ♖xg5+ ♘f6 35
♖g3 and, finally, White is definitely winning.
28...d5??



The finale is slightly reminiscent of the
evergreen game Short-Timman, Tilburg 1991.
43...♖f2+ 44 g3 g5+ 45 ♘xg5 f6+
46 ♘h6 fxe5 47 ♖xe5 1-0

The final standings with two Dutchmen
sharing unbeaten the top honours on 8½/13
came as a complete surprise, both to Dutch
chess fans and pundits alike. A mini-match
was arranged to break the tie. The first two
blitz games were drawn before a somewhat
chaotic Armageddon win as Black gave van
Foreest a remarkable tournament victory. The
last local player to win the Masters in Wijk
was Jan Timman who dominated the 47th
edition back in 1985 with 9/13, finishing a
full point ahead of Nunn and Beliavsky.
Timman's reaction to van Foreest matching
his achievement was: "It's great for Dutch
chess that we now have a new player among
the top, capable of reaching the top-ten."

The first game of the playoff was of some
interest.

b5 33 ♖c7 ♗f6 34 a4 bxa4 35 ♗xa4 ♗f3+ 36 ♖h4 The win has gone and splitting the point is now inevitable.
36...♗f2 37 ♗b3 ♖f8 38 ♖xc6 ♗xh2 39 ♗f6 ♖e8 40 ♗xf7 ♗xc2 41 ♗xc2 ♖xf7 42 ♗f5 ♖f6 43 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 44 ♖xg4 ½-½

Jorden van Foreest was born in 1999 in Utrecht and is the eldest child in a chess family of five brothers and a girl, who all have been raised and homeschooled in the northern chess city of Groningen. His brother Lucas (19), a grandmaster too, is the current Dutch Champion, while his sister Machteld (14) was second in the Dutch Girls Under-20 Championship back when she was 9.

The name van Foreest at the top of Dutch chess goes a long way back to the end of the nineteenth century. Jorden's great-great-grandfather was Arnold van Foreest, who won the Dutch Championship on three occasions (1889, 1893 and 1902), as did his brother Dirk (1885, 1886 and 1887).

In 2013 Jorden won the European Under-14 championship in Budva and the following year he became an International Master. It took him just one more year to achieve all three grandmaster norms, becoming the youngest Dutch GM ever, and another year to win his first national championship title for adults. Last year he was fourth at the Tata Steel Masters on 7/13 before in February winning the Challengers section of the Prague festival.

Following his sensational victory in Wijk this year Jorden entered, for the first time, the exclusive 2700+ elite club. Among the numerous greetings he received in person and on social media, a special one arrived from the player who won Wijk three years in a row, starting exactly three months before Jorden's birth. Garry Kasparov tweeted: "Congratulations to Jorden van Foreest, the first Dutchman to win the traditional Wijk aan Zee super tournament in 36 years. Long past are the days when the local players were considered targets! Great news for a great chess nation."

Our hero himself commented: "Playing as a kid in the amateur sections I always dreamed of playing with the world's best at Tata Steel Chess. Not in my wildest dreams would I have expected to ever win it one day!"



Once again Anish Giri had to play the role of bridesmaid, not bride. He was up with the leaders throughout and could have entered the final round a point clear had he put away Alireza Firouzja.



As so often, the podium says it all. Van Foreest is clearly delighted, Giri can't stop thinking of what might have been as late as the play-off, and Esipenko looks rather surprised by his result.

83rd Tata Steel Masters - Wijk aan Zee, Netherlands - Fri 15th - Sun 31st January 2021 (Category 19 = ave. rating 2725)																			
	Player	Country	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Pts	TPR
1	Jorden van Foreest	NED	2671	#	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	½	½	8.5	2839
2	Anish Giri	NED	2764	½	#	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	8.5	2832
3	Andrey Esipenko	RUS	2677	½	½	#	½	½	1	½	0	½	½	1	1	½	1	8	2815
4	Fabiano Caruana	USA	2823	½	½	½	#	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	8	2804
5	Alireza Firouzja	FID	2749	½	½	½	½	#	0	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	8	2810
6	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2862	½	½	0	½	1	#	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	7.5	2771
7	Pentala Harikrishna	IND	2732	0	½	½	½	0	½	#	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	6.5	2724
8	Aryan Tari	NOR	2625	0	0	1	½	½	½	½	#	½	½	½	½	½	½	6	2703
9	Nils Grandelius	SWE	2663	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	#	1	½	½	1	1	6	2700
10	Jan-Krzysztof Duda	POL	2743	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	#	½	½	½	½	5.5	2666
11	David Anton Guijarro	ESP	2679	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	#	½	½	½	5	2641
12	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	POL	2705	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	#	½	½	5	2639
13	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2784	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	#	1	5	2633
14	Alexander Donchenko	GER	2668	½	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	#	3.5	2559