

Jerzy Konikowski / Uwe Bekemann

World Chess Championship 2018

Fabiano Caruana
vs.
Magnus Carlsen



Joachim Beyer Verlag



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Preface

The everyday interest of the media in chess is usually very limited. However, this can change on the occasion of outstanding events when even chess can reach the evening news on TV.

A fight for the crown of the World Chess Champion is clearly number one among these outstanding events. The 2018 World Cup match between defending champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway and his challenger Fabiano Caruana from the USA electrified the chess world and made the general public pay attention to the royal game. – Could another American win the world championship title for the first time since the brilliant Robert („Bobby“) Fischer succeeded in doing so in 1972?

The games were broadcast live on the Internet worldwide – not only by chess sites, but also by other media such as TV and large newspaper publishers. And often the games were professionally commented on by well-known top players.

Before the start of the World Cup, the public had no clear favorite. Of course, it was expected that Magnus Carlsen, the reigning world champion and number 1 in the world rankings, would play a strong match, in which he could benefit from his experience of three previous World Cup fights. However, Caruana was expected to play at least equal, since he was the number 2 in the world rankings only three points behind Carlsen. And if he could succeed in reaching his top form as at the Sinquefeld Cup in St. Louis 2014 (where he won with 8.5 points from 10 games and three points ahead of Magnus Carlsen), he could even become the favorite.

But in the event that a tiebreak would be necessary after 12 games, the advantage would be on Carlsen's side, as he clearly dominates in rapid and Blitz chess.

Before the match, Magnus Carlsen himself said Fabiano Caruana might be a worthy successor. And after the match, he praised him as an equal opponent. In fact, he expects him to once again seek the right to challenge him, possibly as soon as in 2020.

Some chess enthusiasts called the classical games disappointing. However, this applied only to the result since all games ended in a draw. In fact, both opponents offered first-class chess. And since both were well prepared, the opponent's opening choices with occasional novelties (which will certainly be tested in future practice) had no bearing on their solid play.

When both players had 6 points after the 12 classical games, a tiebreak became necessary. According to the rules, a maximum of four rapid games would be played, and only if they still didn't lead to a decision, the fight would contin-

ue with Blitz games. However, this didn't happen. Carlsen confirmed his dominance in rapid chess and didn't leave the challenger the slightest chance. After three games, the final score was 9–6, and Magnus Carlsen was confirmed as the old and the new world champion.

We have tried to capture the tension of the World Cup fight for our readers as well as possible. The comments of the 12 classical and 3 rapid games are not only intended to make the battle 'experienceable', but also to offer plenty of additional information.

Although the final match clearly forms the core of our book, we took the time to draw a more complete picture of the protagonists. So we take a look at their respective career, at many of their games played in the past and at some of the highlights among them. We hope that you enjoy the result and that something like your own „World Cup feeling“ will develop!

A book like this is inconceivable without the support and help of others. Many thanks to you all! We would particularly like to mention GM Dr. Karsten Müller, GM Artur Jussupow and Prof. Dr. Ingo Althöfer, who granted us an interview. And Dr. Karsten Müller additionally for kindly allowing us to publish some of his own analyzes. We thank the artist Rosemarie J. Pfortner for her permission to publish her portrait drawing of the two World Cup heroes. And of course we would also like to thank the publisher Robert Ullrich for his commitment and his assistant Thomas Beyer for creating the print set.

Jerzy Konikowski & Uwe Bekemann, December 2018

Introduction

Let's take a brief look at the history of world championships to get a good start on the subject. The match Carlsen – Caruana is generally regarded as the 48th World Chess Championship. "So many already?"; some readers will perhaps wonder, while others, having in mind the age-old European chess tradition, will state the exact opposite, "Not more yet?"

The first official world championship was played in 1886, when Wilhelm Steinitz won the crown in his match against Johannes Zukertort. Even before that, certain players were regarded as 'the world's best', but this was more of an agreement within the chess world. The history of the so-called 'private world championships' began only with the above mentioned match. However, the first title holders treated the title as a property, and thus tended to handle it to their liking, especially when it came to recognizing challenges and determining the modalities for a title fight.

After defending the title successfully three times, Steinitz finally vacated the throne in 1894 to Emanuel Lasker, who was to remain the champion of champions for 27 years. Even though during this time the first world war took place, the duration of Lasker's reign can only be called imposing.

The first time the world championship was held under the auspices of the World Chess Federation (FIDE) was in 1948. Mikhail Botvinnik took the title by winning a special tournament, as after the death of the ruling world champion, Alexander Alekhine, a duel between two opponents was not possible. This championship was the beginning of the so-called 'Soviet era', during which all world champions came from the Soviet Union. It lasted until 1972, when the American Robert („Bobby“) Fischer snatched the title from Boris Spasski. This duel also became a political spectacle, since the West was finally able to put an end to the hitherto dominant chess performance of the socialist world of the East.

In 1993, FIDE lost control over the individual world championships, when Gari Kasparov, in a conflict with the World Chess Federation, defended his title (from the match against Anatoly Karpov in 1985) against Nigel Short – but under the umbrella of the newly formed 'Professional Chess Association' (PCA). In competition with the PCA, six so-called 'FIDE world championships' took place. However, they failed to gain general recognition.

In 2006 the chess world succeeded in organizing a 'reunion match' in which Vladimir Kramnik beat the FIDE World Champion Vesselin Topalov. After Viswanathan Anand defeated Kramnik in 2007, the title finally went to the current title holder, Magnus Carlsen, in 2013. Up to now 47 world championships produced 16 title holders. Since they were frequently able to ward off the at-

tacks of their challengers, this list is quite short – even after more than 130 years of title fights.

	Name	Country	Period
1	Wilhelm Steinitz	Austria–Hungary/USA	1886–1894
2	Emanuel Lasker	Germany	1894–1921
3	José Raúl Capablanca	Cuba	1921–1927
4	Alexander Alekhine	Russia/France	1927–1935 1937–1946
5	Max Euwe	Netherlands	1935–1937
6	Mikhail Botvinnik	USSR	1948–1957 1958–1960 1961–1963
7	Vasily Smyslov	USSR	1957–1958
8	Mikhail Tal	USSR	1960–1961
9	Tigran Petrosian	USSR	1963–1969
10	Boris Spasski	USSR	1969–1972
11	Bobby Fischer	USA	1972–1975
12	Anatoly Karpov	USSR/Russia	1975–1985
13	Garri Kasparov	USSR/Russia	1985–2000
14	Vladimir Kramnik	Russia	2000–2007
15	Viswanathan Anand	India	2007–2013
16	Magnus Carlsen	Norway	2013–

As the above list shows, in the history of the World Championships so far only two players have managed to regain the title after losing it.

The World Cup 2018 could be regarded as a real top duel. The world champion was number one in the world rankings, while his challenger was just 3 points behind him in second place. Therefore, an exciting duel was to be expected.



Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana, drawing by Rosemarie J. Pfortner



The match venue – ‘The College’

Chapter 1

A Short Portrait of the Opponents

The Challenger

Fabiano Caruana

Fabiano Caruana was born in Miami in 1992 and is a US citizen as well as an Italian citizen. After several successes in childhood days (especially in the US and then generally in the Pan-American area), he continued his steep career as a young adult by several victories and good placements on the European tournament stage. The first time he made the chess world sit up and take notice was in 2008 when he won the C-group of the 'Corus Tournament' in Wijk aan Zee with a lead of two points. And when in the following year he succeeded to win the B Group (albeit by only a small margin), he was increasingly traded as a possible candidate even for the highest title.

Then, in 2012, he set the first big exclamation mark when he won the extremely strong '40th Dortmund GM tournament'. Although *this* huge success was not yet expected at this stage by most experts, his triumph at the '42nd Dortmund GM tournament' two years later didn't come as a surprise any more. And while in 2012 he had his nose just slightly ahead thanks to a better Sonneborn-Berger score, his victory in 2014 was already confirmed after the penultimate round.

However, his performance at the 'Sinquefeld Cup' in St. Louis in 2014 is considered his greatest success so far, as he won with three points ahead of Magnus Carlsen. His 8.5 points out of 10 games equalled a performance of 3103 Elo.



Fabiano Caruana

So far he has participated in five Chess Olympiads, playing for Italy in 2008, 2010 and 2012. At the Chess Olympiad in Baku 2016, he played on the top board for the United States for the first time, and his team won the gold medal. At the following Chess Olympiad 2018 in Batumi, Georgia, the team won the silver medal, to which he contributed significantly by scoring 7 points out of 10 games.

In his attempt to already qualify as a challenger for the 2016 World Cup, he narrowly failed, as in the Candidates Tournament he came in second behind winner Sergey Karjakin. In the Berlin Candidates Tournament in March 2018, however, he won with 9 points out of 14 games and thus secured his ticket for the following World Cup duel.

For this double-round event, eight top players had qualified in different ways. The American was at the top of the table almost the entire course and deservedly won in front of Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Azerbaijan) and his predecessor as challenger of the world champion, Sergey Karjakin (Russia).

The following game from the 7th round against Levon Aronjan was crucial for Caruana. The Armenian had started as a big favorite, but then landed surprisingly in last place.

Game 1
Aronjan – Caruana
 Queen's Gambit [D39]
 Berlin 2018

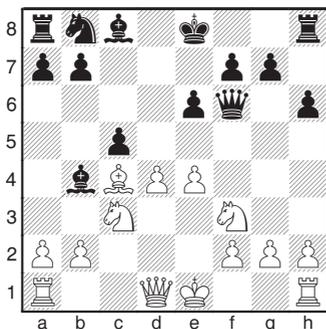
1.d4 ♖f6 **2.c4** e6 **3.♗f3** d5 **4.♗c3** dxc4
5.e4 ♕b4 **6.♕g5** h6

The normal continuation is 6...c5, whereas the text move forces Black to make a concrete decision.

7.♕xf6

White can also keep the bishop by playing 7.♕h4.

7...♖xf6 **8.♕xc4** c5



9.0-0

White secures the king first of all. He can also immediately fight for the initiative by means of the energetic 9.e5; e.g. 9...♖d8 10.d5 exd5 11.♕xd5 and then:

1) 11...0-0 **12.♖c1** ♗c6 **13.0-0** ♗d4
14.♕e4 ♖e8 **15.♗d5** ♕f5 **16.♕xf5** ♖xd5
17.♗xd4 ♖xe5 (17...♖xd4=) **18.♗b5**
 ♖xd1 **19.♖fxd1** ♖xf5 **20.a3** (20.♗d6!)
20...c4! **21.axb4** ♖xb5 **22.♖xc4** a5
23.g3 ½-½, Aronjan–Kramnik, Moscow 2009;

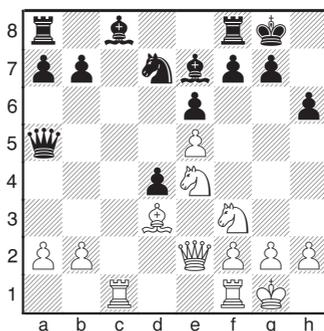
2) 11...♕xc3+ **12.bxc3** 0-0 **13.0-0** ♖c7
14.♖b3 ♗c6 **15.♖fe1** ♕g4 **16.e6** ♕xe6

17.♕xe6 fxe6 **18.♖xe6** ♖f7 **19.♖ae1**
 ♗h8 **20.♖b5** with an advantage for White, Aronjan–Morozevich, Moscow 2009.

9...cxd4 **10.e5** ♖d8 **11.♗e4** 0-0
12.♖e2 ♕e7 **13.♖ad1** ♖c7 **14.♕d3**

White wants to proceed with ♗g3 and ♖e4 in order to obtain attacking chances against Black's king. Correspondingly, the counter plan is clear: First of all, to ensure a reliable defence – and then to counter at the right moment.

14...♗d7 **15.♖c1** ♖a5



16.g4!?

This sharp approach, which weakens the position of the own king under material sacrifice, soon leads to adventurous tactical complications. Caruana proves, however, that he has sufficient countermeasures.

16...♗xe5 **17.♗xe5** ♖xe5 **18.f4** ♖a5
18...♖d5 **19.g5** leads to the game continuation after **19...♖d8**.

19.g5 ♖d8

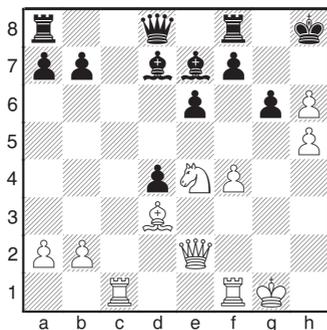
The situation is very complicated, as the following line shows: **19...g6** **20.h4** (20.gxh6 ♗h7!) **20...♕d7** **21.h5** hxg5
22.♖c5 ♕xc5 **23.♗f6+** ♗h8! (23...♗g7?
24.♖e5+–) **24.hxg6** (24.♖e5 ♕b6–+)

24...fxg6 25.♖h2+ ♔g7 26.fxg5 ♜xf6
 27.gxf6+ ♕f7 28.♗h7+ ♕e8 29.f7+
 ♔d8 30.f8♗+ ♕xf8 31.♞xf8+ ♕e8
 32.♕xg6 ♗e1+ and Black escapes by
 means of a perpetual.

20.h4

White must play actively.

20...♕d7 21.gxh6 g6 22.h5 ♕h8



23.♔h2?

Instead of this loss of tempo, Aronjan should have played 23.hxg6 fxg6 24.♘c5 ♕xc5 25.♞xc5 ♕c6 26.♞g5 to keep the position in balance.

23...♕c6 24.♞f3

After 24.hxg6 fxg6 25.♗g4 ♕xe4 26.♕xe4 ♞f6 Black would have everything under control.

24...♕d6

The centralisation 24...♗d5! was better, as after the probable sequence 25.♞g3 ♗xh5+ 26.♗xh5 gxh5 27.♞g7 f5 28.♘g5 ♕xg5 29.fxg5 ♞g8 Black would have a winning position.

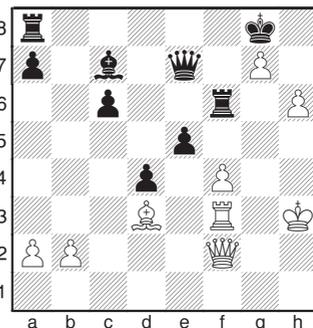
25.♗f2 ♕c7 26.♔h3 ♗e7 27.♘g5

Caruana proposed 27.♞g1! ♞g8 28.♞fg3, although this would not have made his life easier.

27...e5 28.♞xc6

In a difficult situation, White tries to complicate things.

28...bxc6 29.♘xf7+ ♞xf7 30.hxg6 ♞f6 31.g7+ ♕g8



32.♕c4+?

This is the decisive mistake. Only after 32.♗h4! White could have put up some resistance.

32...♔h7 33.♗h4 e4 34.♞g3 ♕xf4 35.g8♗+ ♞xg8 36.♕xg8+ ♔h8 37.♞g7 ♗f8

White resigned.

After the Candidates Tournament in Berlin, Caruana travelled to Karlsruhe, where he participated in the strong 'GRENKE Chess Classic' (from March 31st to April 9th). Immediately in the first round, the duel against Magnus Carlsen took place, which was drawn after 41 moves. At the end, the American again managed a great success by winning with 6.5 out of 9 points and leaving Carlsen a full point behind.

Asked by journalists how he was able to keep his good form, he pointed out his intense sports training, containing weightlifting, jogging, yoga, and so on.

Against the Russian Nikita Vityugov, Caruana played the Petrov Defense, which has been his special weapon for some time. He has enriched this opening with some interesting ideas, as e.g. in this game. The move 5...♚d7!? is a novelty at this point.

Game 2 Vityugov – Caruana

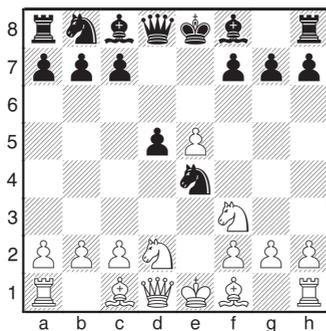
Petrov Defense [C43]

Karlsruhe/Baden Baden 2018

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4

For the main line 3.♘xe5 – see Game 5.

3...♘xe4 4.dxe5 d5 5.♘bd2



5...♚d7!?

Actually, this move violates the general rules of chess, because the queen shouldn't be brought into the game too early. And in this case, it even blocks the way of the bishop c8. However, modern top chess has its own rules!

In the Candidates Tournament (Berlin 2018), Caruana played 5...♘d2 against Grishuk. After 6.♙xd2 ♙e7 7.♙d3 c5 8.c3 ♘c6 9.0–0 ♙g4 10.♞e1 ♚d7 11.h3 ♙h5 12.♙f4 ♚e6 13.a3 0–0 14.b4 h6 15.♙g3 b6 16.♘d4 ♙xd1 17.♘xe6 fxe6 18.♞axd1 c4 19.♙c2 b5 20.a4 a6 the position was roughly equal, although Caruana managed to win later on.

6.♙d3 ♘c5 7.♙e2 g6

The fianchetto puts pressure on the pawn on e5.

8.♘b3

8.0–0!? looked logical, in order to first secure the king before choosing a concrete plan.

8...♘e6 9.♙e3

White follows the stereotype. Chasing the opponent's knight with 9.♘bd4!? came into consideration, as after e.g. 9...♙g7 (or 9...c5 10.♘xe6 fxe6 11.h4 and White attacks) 10.♘xe6 ♚xe6 11.0–0 0–0 12.♞e1 White would stand slightly more active.

9...c5 10.♘g5 b6

After 10...d4 11.♘e4 ♙e7 12.♙h6 ♚d5 13.♙f3 ♚xe5 14.0–0 White would have some initiative for the pawn.

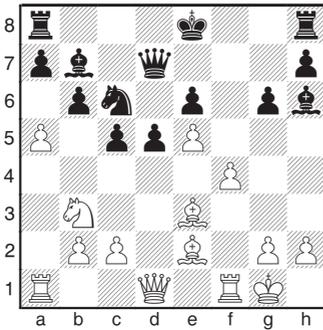
11.♘xe6 fxe6

11...♚xe6 12.♙f3 ♙b7 13.c4 ♚xe5 14.0–0 ♙d6 15.g3 0–0 16.♞e1±

12.a4

White wants to undermine the opponent's mighty pawns. After 12.c3 ♘c6 13.f4 ♙g7 14.0–0 0–0 the position would be balanced.

12...♙b7 13.0–0 ♘c6 14.f4 ♙h6 15.a5



15...Nxe7!

The knight is transferred to a better square. The alternative 15...Nxe5? was not recommended in view of 16.f4! cxd4 17.fxg5±.

16.f4?!

The sense of this move is not obvious. After the game, 16.g3 was proposed to allow the bishop to retreat to f2. In the game it has to go to c1 to keep the pawn on f4 protected.

16...d4 17.f4 0-0 18.Nd3 f5
19.Nh3 g7 20.Nd2 Nf5 21.c4 dxc3
22.bxc3 Rad8

The immediate 22...b5!? came into consideration.

23.axb6 axb6 24.Re1 b5 25.Ne4 Ne7

An interesting alternative consisted in 25...fxe4!? 26.Rxe4 h5 27.fxf5 (27.f3? Nd3!) 27...Nd1+ 28.f2 Rxf5 29.Re1 Nc2+ 30.f3 Rf1 and Black is better.

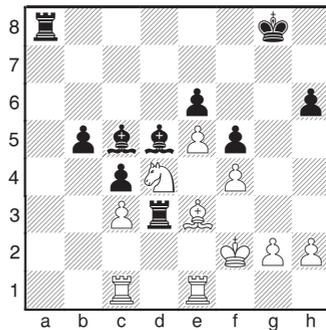
26.Ng5

26.f3!? was probably better.

26...h6 27.Nf3 f6 28.fxf5 gxf5
29.f3 Rf3!

The penetration of the rook secures a decisive advantage.

30.Rac1 Ra8 31.Nh4 Nxe4 32.Nxe4
c4 33.f2 f8 34.Nf3 f5 35.Nd4
f5



36.Nxf5?

It was necessary to play 36.Nc2 with the probable continuation 36...f7 37.Nb4 fxb4 38.cxb4 Ra4 39.f3 (39.Rb1 f4!) 39...d2+ 40.f2 Rxe2+ 41.fxe2 Ra2+ 42.f3 Rxe2. Although Black has a clear advantage in the ending, White could still put up resistance in view of the opposite coloured bishops.

36...Ra3! 37.Nxe6+ Ng7 38.f5 fxc1
39.fxc1 Rxc3 40.f6+ Ng6

White resigned.

At the US-championship in Saint Louis (April 17th–30th, 2018), all eyes were mainly focused on Fabiano Caruana, the first American since Bobby Fischer, who had qualified for a World Cup final. Surprisingly, however, Samuel Shankland won with 8.5 points out of 11 games. The favorite lost a balanced endgame against Zviad Izoria. With 8 points on his account, he was ultimately second. From this tournament we have selected the following exciting game.

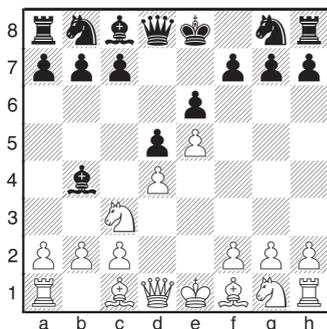
Game 3

Caruana – Lenderman

French Defense [C18]

Saint Louis 2018

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5



4...c5

Besides this standard move, both Carlsen and Caruana have 4...♗e7 in their repertoire just as well. Let's have a look at some lines after 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3:

1) 6...c5

A) After 7.♗f3 ♗bc6 8.♗d3 ♗d7 9.0-0 ♖c7 10.♞e1 ♗a5 11.♗g5 ♗g6 12.♞e3 c4 13.♗e2 ♗c6 14.♗h5 ♗ce7 15.♖g4 ♗a4 16.♞a2 ♗f5 17.♞e1 0-0-0 a complicated position arose in the game Caruana–Carlsen, Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2012, where White went on to win.

B) 7.♖g4 cxd4 8.♖xc7 ♞g8 9.♖xh7 ♖c7 10.♗e2 ♗bc6 11.f4 dxc3 12.♗xc3 ♗d4 13.♗b2 ♗d7 14.0-0-0 ♖b6 15.♖d3 ♗df5 16.♞d2 ♞c8 17.g3 ♗e3 18.♗e4 ♞xc2+ 19.♞xc2 dxe4 20.♖xe4 ♗xc2 21.♖xc2 ♗c6 22.♗g2 ♗xg2 23.♖xg2 ♗d5 Despite White's extra pawn, Black could save the game due to his strong knight on d5; Giri–Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2018.

2) 6...b6 7.♖g4 ♗f8

A) 8.a4 ♗a6 9.♗xa6 ♗xa6 10.♖e2 ♗b8 11.a5 ♗bc6 12.axb6 cxb6 13.♗f3 ♗a5 14.0-0 h6 15.♗a3 ♗g8 16.♗b4 ♗c4 17.♞a6 ♖c8 18.♞fa1 ♗c6=, Giri–Caruana, Leuven 2018;

B) 8.♗h3 ♗a6 9.♗xa6 ♗xa6 10.♗f4 ♗b8 11.♗h5 ♗f5 12.♗g5 ♖e8 13.0-0 h6 14.♗d2 ♖a4 15.♖d1 ♗d7 16.g4 ♗e7 17.f4 g6 18.♗g3 ♗e8 19.f5 ♗f8 20.fxg6 fxg6 21.♖c1 h5 22.♗h6 hxg4 23.♗xf8 ♞xf8 24.♞xf8+ ♗xf8 25.♖h6+ ♗g8 26.♖g5 ♖e8 27.♞f1 with a winning position, Aronjan–Caruana, chess.com INT 2018.

5.a3 ♗xc3+

In the game Georgiadis–Carlsen, Biel 2018, the world champion tried out the retreat 5...♗a5. After 6.b4 cxd4 7.♖g4 ♗f8 8.♗b5 ♗c7 9.♖xd4 ♗c6 10.♖c5+ ♗ge7 11.♗xc7 ♖xc7 12.♗f3 b6 13.♖d6 ♖xd6 14.exd6 ♗f5 15.♗f4 f6 the position was very complicated, and the battle ended peacefully.

6.bxc3 ♖a5

6...♗e7 is considered best.

7.♗d2 ♖a4 8.♖g4 ♗f8

The more common alternative is 8...g6.

9.h4

Instead of the retreat 9.♖d1, White proceeds actively on the king side.