

**Jerzy Konikowski / Uwe Bekemann**  
with the cooperation of Karsten Müller

# **World Chess Championship 2021**

**Ian Nepomniachtchi**  
**vs.**  
**Magnus Carlsen**

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**JBV Chess Books**

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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 and of course the 2021 title fight between world champion Magnus Carlsen from Norway and his challenger Ian Nepomniachtchi from Russia was no exception.

Before the match, Carlsen was traded as a favorite. However, there was little doubt that Ian Nepomniachtchi could be capable of an outsider victory. Mind you, despite his significantly lower Elo, he had always looked good against the world champion and could even be proud of a better score in their classical games. So who would have expected that the title fight would end after 11 games and with a lead of 4 points for the world champion?

The opponents mostly played high-quality chess, although some games were peaceful and thus less exciting. To everyone's astonishment, however, the challenger made several drastic mistakes of unusual caliber for the level of a world championship. Overall, the general impression was that Nepo was not in the best of shape.

After all, game 6 turned into a historical chess event when Carlsen demonstrated his phenomenal endgame skills and won in 136 moves. The previous 'longest world championship game' (124 moves) was fought out between Anatoly Karpov and Viktor Korchnoi in 1978.

We have tried to capture the tension of the title fight as best we could. The comments of the 11 games are not only intended to make the battle 'experienceable' but also to offer plenty of additional information.

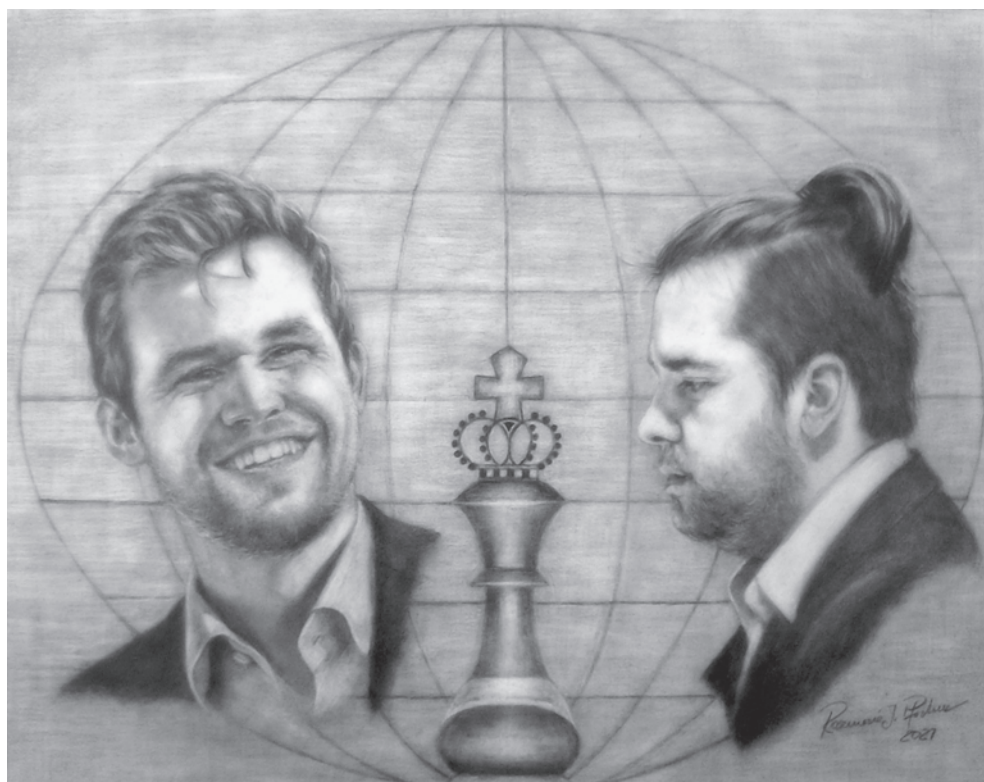
By exploring the games at home, you will be perfectly entertained and delighted by the fighting spirit of the protagonists. Our analyzes and comments help the reader not to miss any facets of the battle and to bring hidden opportunities to light. Since our book is also intended to improve the reader's playing strength, we have included some opening theory, a lot of tips of how to handle endgames – and even exercises to be solved.

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 Championship 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 thank GM Dr. Karsten Müller, GM Mihail Marin and the president of the German Chess Federation, Ullrich Krause, for their interviews. 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 Championship heroes. And of course, we would also like to thank the publisher Robert Ullrich for his commitment, his assistant Thomas Beyer for creating the print set and Lothar Nikolaiczuk for his excellent editing.

Jerzy Konikowski & Uwe Bekemann, December 2021



*Drawing by Rosemarie J. Pfortner*

# Introduction

World chess championships have been officially held since 1886. The upcoming match between world champion Magnus Carlsen and his Russian challenger Ian Nepomniachtchi would be the 49<sup>th</sup> in a series of 48 previous title fights. The venue was the Exhibition Centre in Dubai. Originally, the match was supposed to take place from December 20, 2020 as part of the 'Expo' in Dubai. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it had to be postponed.

The event was scheduled for the period from November 24 to December 16, 2021. However, on December 10, Carlsen defended his title with a fourth win, so the world championship 2021 ended six days earlier than planned.

Let's take a brief look at the history of world championships to get a good start on the subject.

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. In addition to his capabilities on the chess board, the challenger often needed substantial financial resources, especially for the prize fund.

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 Garri 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 48 world championships produced 16 title holders. Since they were frequently able to ward off the attacks of their challengers, this list is quite short – even after more than 130 years of title fights.

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Period</b>
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.

As number 1 in the world rankings and with an Elo rating of 2856, Magnus Carlsen was the favorite of the match. With his clearly lower Elo of 2782, Nepomniachtchi was number 5 in the world rankings. Nevertheless, quite a few experts believed that he was good for a surprise – after all, he was the only world class GM with a positive score against Carlsen in classical chess. In the event that the scheduled 14 classical games



*Ian Nepomniachtchi*



# Chapter 1

## A Short Portrait of the Opponents

### The Challenger Ian Nepomniachtchi

Ian Alexandrovich Nepomniachtchi (often nicknamed “Nepo” because of his rather difficult surname) was born on July 14, 1990 in Bryansk, a city with around 415,000 inhabitants around 380 km southwest of Moscow.

He obtained the right to challenge world champion Magnus Carlsen by winning the 2020 Candidates Tournament, which was interrupted due to the Corona pandemic and could only be ended in spring 2021. He had qualified for this tournament via the FIDE Grand Prix 2019.

Nepomniachtchi learned to play chess at the age of 4. Like many young talents in chess-loving Russia, the patriotic promotion helped him to quickly develop his skills and obtain numerous tournament successes – in short: almost a picture book career. Among his greatest international successes: European Championship U10 and twice in the U12 category + the U12 and U16 world championship titles.

In 2004 FIDE awarded him the title of International Master, in 2007 the title of Grandmaster.

Nepomniachtchi was also very successful as a team player. With the Russian team he became world champion in 2013 and European champion in 2015.

After his victory in the 2020 Candidates Tournament (2021), he reached fourth place in the world rankings with Elo 2792.

The rating gap of more than 50 points puts Nepomniachtchi in the outsider role. Magnus Carlsen knows, however, that he should not underestimate his opponent. After all, his negative record against “Nepo” in classical games will be a warning. In addition, like the world champion, Nepomniachtchi is also a very strong blitz and rapid player. In a World Championship match, this ability can also have an impact on the outcome.

So Carlsen has to be prepared for a challenger, who is known for his aggressive style and who will opt for attacking positions in which he can constantly confront his opponent with difficult decisions.

At the 2018 Chess Olympiad in the Georgian port city of Batumi, Ian Nepomniachtchi played at the second board of the Russian team and was instrumental in winning the bronze medal. In the following interesting game he defeated the French chess legend Etienne Bacrot.

Game 1  
**Nepomniachtchi – Bacrot**  
 Réti Opening [A06]  
 Batumi 2018

**1.♘f3 d5 2.e3**

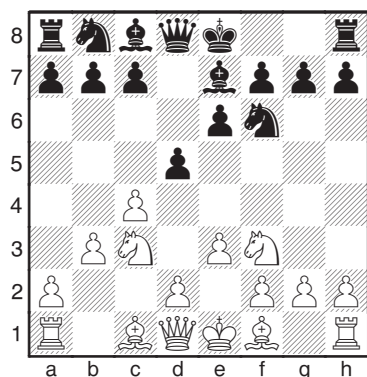
White plays the Réti without the usual fianchetto of the king bishop.

**2...♗f6 3.c4**

With this typical lever action, White begins the fight for the center.

**3...e6 4.♗c3 ♕e7 5.b3**

In this line, the queen bishop is developed on the long diagonal.



**5...0-0**

In Nepomniachtchi – Nakamura, St. Petersburg 2018, the challenger was confronted with 5...c5 and the game took the following course.

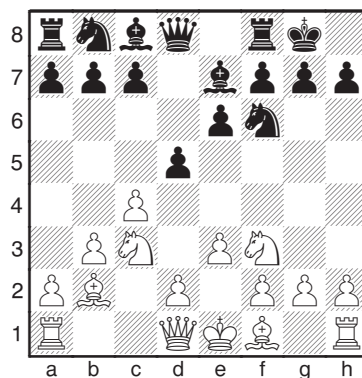
**6.cxd5 ♗xd5**

(In the game Nepomniachtchi – Nyzhnyk, chess.com INT 2020, Black managed to equalize after 6...exd5 7.d4 ♗c6 8.♗b2 0-0 9.♗e2 ♗g4 10.dxc5 ♗xc5 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♖c1 ♗f8 13.h3 ♗h5 14.♗b5 ♗e4 15.♗fd4 ♗xe2 16.♗xe2 ♗b6 17.♖fd1 a6 18.♗c3 ♗xd4 19.♖xd4 ♗xd4 20.exd4

♗xc3 21.♗xe8 ♖xe8 22.♗xc3 ♖e2 23.a4 f6 24.♗f1 ♖a2=.)

7.♗b2 ♗xc3 8.♗xc3 0-0 9.h4 ♗f6 10.♗c2 ♗xc3 11.dxc3 ♗c6 12.♗d3 f5 13.0-0-0 ♗a5 14.e4 b5 15.exf5 exf5 16.♖he1 ♖b8 17.♗e5 ♗xe5 18.♖xe5 ♗c7 19.♗e2 a6 20.♗c2 c4 21.♗b2 ♗c6 22.f4 ♖b6 23.b4 ♗f6 24.g3 ♖e6 25.♗dd5 ♗fe8 26.♖xe6 ♖xe6 27.♗d2 ♖e8 28.a4 with better prospects for White.

**6.♗b2**



**6...c5**

With this strong push, Black strives for an advantage in the center. However, it can also be postponed or even omitted, as shown in the following alternatives:

I. After 6...dxc4 7.♗xc4 c5, Black took advantage of the situation as follows: 8.h4 a6 9.♗b1 b5 10.♗e2 ♗b7 11.♗g5 ♗bd7 12.♗f3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♖c8 14.♗e2 c4 15.0-0 ♗c5 16.bxc4 bxc4 17.♗d4 ♗fe4 18.h5 h6 19.♗c2 ♗d3 20.♗a4 ♗d5±, Nepomniachtchi – Yu Yangyi, St. Petersburg 2018.

**II. 6...b6 7.cxd5 ♗xd5**

(7...exd5 8.d4 ♗b7 9.♗d3 c5 10.0-0 ♗bd7=)

**8.♗xd5**



*Magnus Carlsen*

# The Defending Champion

## Magnus Carlsen

Magnus Carlsen is a Norwegian citizen. Shortly before his 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday on November 30, 2013, he won the world title by defeating his predecessor Viswanathan Anand in the latter's native country India.

He is the 16<sup>th</sup> world champion in history (not including the winners of the so-called FIDE World Championships from 1993 to 2005).

As the defending champion, he prevailed against Anand in the 2014 title match, against Karjakin in 2016 and against Caruana in 2018.

At the age of five, Carlsen learned the game from his father, who later even gave up his professional activity to support his son's career.

Carlsen's talent was recognized and promoted early on. In addition to his father, the strong Norwegian GM Simen Agdestein later played a special role as a trainer. And from 2009 to 2010, Carlsen's development benefited from the coaching work of Garry Kasparov, who many fans consider to be the best player of all time.

Magnus Carlsen's highest rating to date was 2882 in May 2014 – clear 31 points higher than Garry Kasparov's best rating.

Magnus Carlsen is a „playing“ world champion. As far as his tournament victories are concerned, we would like to limit ourselves only to the most important ones, for the mere enumeration of all his victories in so-called 'elite tournaments' would go beyond the scope of this book.

The focus on his collection of titles (also in Blitz and Rapid) not only confirms his clear supremacy in top chess, but also his versatility. After winning several times in Rapid and Blitz, he is also the current title holder in both domains (last victories in 2019). Furthermore, he is currently the Vice World Champion in Fischer-Random Chess (also known as Chess960).

Carlsen's great influence on world chess isn't just limited to his role as a player. Rather, he also makes things happen or helps ensure their progress. The best example is the „Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour“, which he initiated as a reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the preliminary remarks on Game 10, we will go into this enterprise in more detail.

But now let's take a closer look at Magnus Carlsen as a player.

From November 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, a rapid tournament with 10 strong GM took place in Calcutta. Carlsen clearly won with 15 points ahead of Nakamura with 11 and Giri with 9. The fight Carlsen – Anand was sharp. Both opponents know each other very well because they have already played many games, including two world title fights. In this game Anand did not play optimally and his successor got the upper hand.

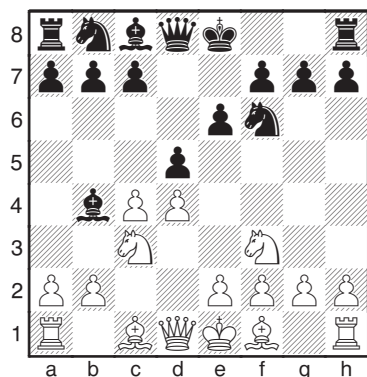
## Game 6

Carlsen – Anand

Queen's Gambit [D38]

Tata Steel India 2019

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♘f3 d5



A position from the Queen's Gambit 'Ragozin Defense' has been reached (by transposition of moves), in which Carlsen has a lot of experience with both colors.

### 5.cxd5

Instead of clarifying the situation in the center, White has the alternatives 5.♙g5 and 5.♖a4+.

Some examples from the world champion's practice may indicate the direction of the ensuing fight.

#### I. 5.♙g5

**A)** 5...dxc4 6.e4 c5 7.♙xc4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♖a5 9.♙xf6 ♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 11.♙f1 ♖xc4+ 12.♙g1 ♙d7 13.♖c1 ♖b4 14.♙xg7 ♖g8 15.♙f6 ♖g6 16.a3 ♖d6 (16...♖xa3?? 17.♙b5+-) 17.e5 ♖d5 18.f3 ♘c6 19.♙xc6 ♖xd1+ 20.♖xd1 ♙xc6 21.♙f2 ♙d5 22.♖c1 ♙d7 23.♖hd1 ♖c8 24.♖xc8 ♙xc8 25.♖d4 ♖h6 26.♖h4 ♖xh4 27.♙xh4 b5 28.♙e3 ♙c7 29.♙d4 ♙c6 30.♙d8 ♙c4 31.♙a5 ♙f1 32.g3 ♙e2 33.f4 ♙g4 34.♙d8 h5 35.♙a5

♙f5 36.♙d8 a6 37.♙a5 ♙g4 38.♙d8 ♙f5 39.♙a5 ♙g4 40.♙d8 ♙f5 ½-½, Radjabov – Carlsen, chess24.com INT 2021

**B)** 5...♗bd7 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♖c2

(7.e3 c5 8.♙d3 ♖a5 9.♖c2 c4 10.♙f5 0-0 11.0-0 ♖e8∞)

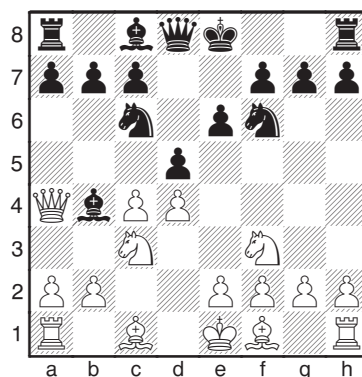
7...c5 8.dxc5 h6 9.♙d2 0-0 10.e3 ♙xc5 11.♖c1 ♖e7 12.♙e2 a6 13.♖d3 ♘b6 14.0-0 ♙g4 15.♙d4 ♙d7 16.♙f3 ♖fe8 17.b3 ♙a3 18.♖c2 ♖ac8 19.♙ce2 ♖xc2 20.♖xc2 ♙e6 21.♙c1 ♖c8 22.♙xa3 ♖xa3 23.♖d2 ♙g4 24.♙xg4 ♙xg4 25.♙f5 and given the isolated ♙d5 White is better, Carlsen – Ivanchuk, Medias 2011.

**C)** 5...h6 6.♙xf6

(Of course, White can avoid this simplifying exchange and choose 6.♙h4 instead.)

6...♖xf6 7.♖a4+ ♘c6 8.e3 0-0 9.♖c1 ♖g6 10.h4 ♖d8 11.h5 ♖f6 12.♖h4 e5 13.cxd5 ♖xd5 14.dxe5 ♙xc3+ 15.♖xc3 ♙xe5 16.♖e8+ ♙h7 17.♖f4 ♖d6 18.♙e2 f5 19.♙d4±, Radjabov – Carlsen, chess24.com INT 2021

**II. 5.♖a4+ ♘c6**



**A)** 6.e3 0-0 7.♖c2 ♖e8 8.♙d2 ♙f8 9.a3

(9.♙e2 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♘b4 11.♖b1 b6 12.0-0 ♙b7 13.♖d1 ♖c8 14.a3 ♘bd5 15.♙d3 c5 16.dxc5 ♖xc5 17.♙xd5 ♖xd5 18.♙c3 ♖h5 19.♙xf6 ♙xf3 20.gxf3 gxf6

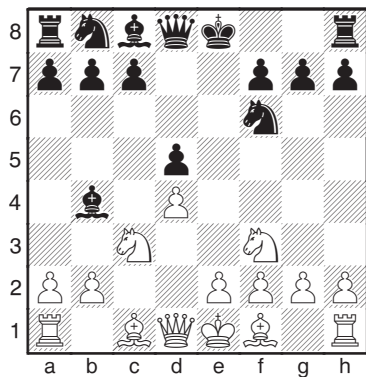
21.f4 f5 22.♙f1 ♘g7 23.♙g2 ♖ac8=, Carlsen – Ding Liren, Chess24.com INT 2020)  
 9...e5 10.dxe5 ♗xe5 11.cxd5 ♗xf3+ 12.gxf3 ♗xd5 13.h4 ♗xc3 14.♙xc3 ♖d5 15.♙e2 ♙f5 16.♖a4 ♙d7 17.♖d1 ♖xf3 18.♙xf3 ♙xa4 19.♙xb7 ♙xd1 20.♙xa8 ♙g4 21.♙c6 ♖d8=, Carlsen – Anand, chess24.com INT 2020

**B) 6.a3 ♙xc3+**

(Another option is 6...♙e7.)

7.bxc3 0-0 8.♙g5 h6 9.♙h4 ♙d7 10.♖c2 ♗a5 11.g4 g5 12.♙g3 ♗e4 13.h4 ♗xg3 14.fxg3 gxh4 15.♖xh4 ♙g7 16.g5 ♖h8 17.♗e5 ♗xc4 18.gxh6+ ♙f8 19.♗xc4 ♖g5 20.♙f2 dxc4 21.♖c1 ♖f6+ 22.♖f4 ♙e7 23.♖xf6+ ♙xf6 24.♙g2 ♖ab8 25.♖h5 ♙g6 26.♖ah1 f5 27.g4 ♖h7 28.g5 ♙c6 29.♙f3 ♙xf3 30.♙xf3 ♖d8 31.♙f4 ♖d5 32.♖h3 c5 33.♖e3 ♖d6 34.dxc5 ♖a6 35.♖d1= 1-0, Carlsen – So, chess24.com INT 2020

**5...exd5**



**6.♙g5**

By pinning the knight, the bishop tries to take advantage of the fact that its black counterpart is on b4.

Carlsen also plays 6.♙f4 as shown in the following examples.

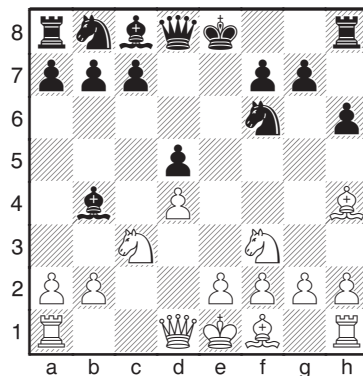
**A) 6...c6 7.e3 ♙f5 8.♖b3**

(8.♙d3 ♙xd3 9.♖xd3 0-0 10.0-0 ♖e8=)

8...♖b6 9.♗h4 ♙g6 10.♗xg6 hxg6 11.h3 ♗bd7 12.♙d3 c5 13.a3 ♙a5 14.♖xb6 ♙xb6 15.dxc5 ♗xc5 16.0-0-0 0-0-0 17.♙b1 ♗e6 18.♙e5 ♙c7 19.♙xc7 ♙xc7 20.♙c2 g5 21.♙b3 ♙c6 22.♖c1±, Carlsen – Aronian, chess24.com INT 2020

**B) 6...0-0 7.e3 c5 8.dxc5 ♖a5 9.♗d2 ♗c6 10.♗b3 ♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 12.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 13.♙xd2 ♗e4+ 14.♙e1 g5 15.♙c7 ♙e6 16.f3 ♖ac8 17.♙g3 ♗xg3 18.hxg3 ♙g7 19.♙d3 h6 20.♙d2 ♗e5=, Carlsen – Aronian, chess24.com INT 2021**

**6...h6 7.♙h4**



**7...0-0**

Black sticks to the principle 'safety first'. Another effective plan is based on the aggressive push 7...g5. The following example illustrates the direction in which the fight can develop.

8.♙g3 ♗e4 9.♗d2 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 ♙xc3 11.♖c1 ♙b2

(11...♙a5? 12.e3 c6 13.h4! with some initiative.)

12.♖xc7 (12.♙xc7!?) 12...♗a6 13.♖c2 ♙xd4 14.e3 ♙g7 15.h4 ♗b4 16.♖c7 0-0 17.hxg5 ♖xg5 18.♙d6 ♗c6 19.♙xf8 ♙xf8 20.♖f3 ♙e6 21.♖xb7 ♖c8 22.♖f4 ♖xf4 23.exf4 ♗d4 24.♗b3 ♗xb3 25.axb3 ♖c2



## Chapter 5

### The Title Fight

The battle for the chess crown was originally scheduled for the end of 2020, but then the pandemic thwarted all planning. So it was postponed and should take place at the Dubai Exhibition Center from November 24<sup>th</sup> to December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

World champion Magnus Carlsen and his challenger Ian Nepomniachtchi were also fighting for the higher share of the impressive prize money of 2 million euros. This sum was divided in a way that was intended as an incentive to fight for a decision within the 14 classical games. If the winner were to be determined without a tie-break, he could pocket 60% – otherwise ‘only’ 55%.

The time control was 120 minutes for the first 40 moves, then 60 minutes for the next 20 moves and – if there was still no decision – 15 minutes for the rest of the game, but with an increment of 30 seconds per move. The first player to score 7.5 points would be the winner of the title fight. In the event of a tie after the 14 classical games, a tie-break should decide.

By the way, for sport-political reasons, Nepomniachtchi was not allowed to play under the flag of his home country Russia, because it was not allowed to be shown according to the judgment of the ‘World Anti-Doping Agency’ (WADA). He therefore played under the logo of the Russian Chess Federation.



**Game 1**  
**Nepomniachtchi – Carlsen**  
 Ruy Lopez [C88]  
 Dubai, November 26, 2021

**1.e4**

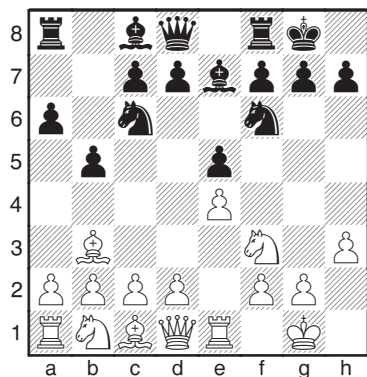
In the run-up to a big fight like this, the chess world speculates above all about potential decisions by both opponents concerning their opening repertoire. The challenger's choice has now been unveiled, but as he is a universal player, especially the alternative 1.d4 could be expected just as well.

**1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5**

Nepomniachtchi chooses the Ruy Lopez, whereas recently he has often played 3.♙c4.

**3...a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.h3**

The usual move is 8.c3 and Carlsen's usual reply is 8...d6.

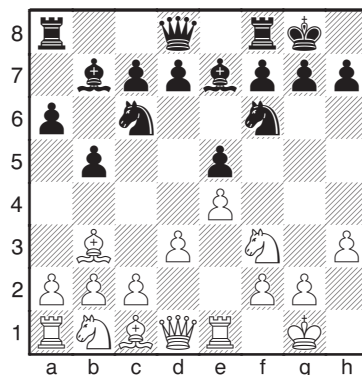


**8...♞a5!?**

The world champion comes up with a very interesting pawn sacrifice, which is nothing new, but unusual. It's rarely played due to White's clearly better success statistics (a little less clear in correspondence

chess). To the best of our knowledge, Carlsen has not yet tried this continuation in his career. His standard answers are 8...♙b7 and 8...d6, as shown in the following examples.

**I. 8...♙b7 9.d3**



**A) 9...d5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♞xe5 ♞xe5!?**  
 (11...♞d4 was played in the 6<sup>th</sup> match game Karjakin-Carlsen, New York 2016, which we have examined in our book "Chess World Championship 2016", Joachim Beyer Verlag 2016.)

12.♞xe5 ♞d6 (12...c5!?) 13.♞e1 ♞ae8  
 14.♞d2 c5 15.♞e4 ♞c6 and the active play offers enough compensation for the pawn.

**B) 9...d6 10.a3 ♞b8**

(The line with 10...♞d7 11.♞bd2 was played in the 4<sup>th</sup> match game Karjakin-Carlsen, New York 2016, which is also to be found in our above-mentioned book.)

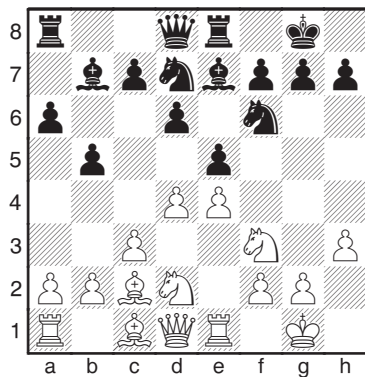
11.♞bd2 ♞bd7 12.♞f1 ♞e8 13.♞g5  
 (13.♞g3 ♙f8 14.♞g5 d5 15.exd5 ♞c5  
 16.c4 ♞xb3 17.♞xb3 c6 18.dxc6 ♙xc6  
 19.cxb5 ♙d5 20.♞d1 axb5 21.♞5e4 h6  
 22.♞f3 ♞a6 23.♙d2 ♙a8 24.♙b4 ♞d5  
 25.♙xf8 ♞xf8 26.d4 exd4 27.♞f5 ♞e7  
 28.♞ad1 ♞xf5 29.♞xf5 ♞e6 30.f3 d3  
 31.♞xb5 ♙xe4 32.♞xe4 ♞xe4 33.fxe4



♖d4+ 34.♙h1 ♜d8 35.♜b4 ♜e3 36.♜a5 ♜d4 37.♜d2 ♜xe4 and in the game Zhi-galko-Carlsen, Berlin 2015, Black had a promising passer and went on to win.)

13...d5 14.exd5 ♙xd5 15.♙xd5 ♜xd5 16.♜h5 ♙xg5 17.♙xg5 f6 18.♙d2 ♜e7 19.♜g3 ♜f7=, Nakamura-Carlsen, Internet 2020

II. 8...d6 9.c3 ♜b8 10.d4 ♜bd7 11.♜bd2 ♙b7 12.♙c2 ♜e8



**A) 13.♜f1 ♙f8 14.♜g3 g6 15.a4**

(15.a3 ♙g7 16.b3 d5 17.dxe5 ♜xe4 18.♜xe4 dxe4 19.♙g5 ♜c8 20.♙xe4 ♙xe4 21.♜xe4 ♜xe5 22.♜xe5 ♜xe5 23.♜xe5 ♙xe5 24.♜f3 ♙b8 25.♜e1 ♙d6=, Maghsoodloo-Carlsen, Internet 2020)

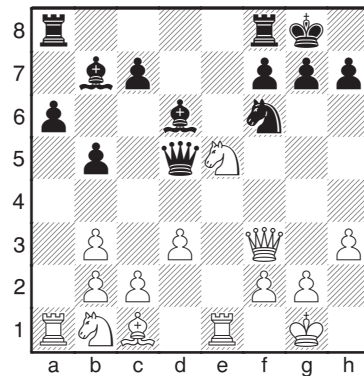
15...♜b6 16.a5 ♜bd7 17.b4 ♙g7 18.d5 ♜c8 19.♙b3 c6 20.dxc6 ♜xc6 21.♜c2 ♜c8 22.♜a2 ♜e7 23.♙b2 ♙h6 24.♜ad1 ♙f4 25.♜f1 ♜c7 26.♜1d2 ♜a8=, Vachier-Lagrave – Carlsen, Internet 2021.

**B) 13.a4 ♙f8 14.♙d3 c6 15.♜c2 ♜c8 16.axb5 axb5 17.b4**

(17.b3 g6 18.♙b2 ♜c7 19.c4 bxc4 20.♜xc4 exd4 21.♙xd4 d5=)

17...♜c7 18.♙b2 ♜a8 19.♜ad1 ♜b6 20.c4 bxc4 21.♜xc4 ♜xc4 22.♙xc4 h6 23.dxe5 dxe5 24.♙c3 ♙a6 25.♙b3 c5=, Karjakin-Carlsen, Stavanger 2013

9.♜xe5 ♜xb3 10.axb3 ♙b7 11.d3 d5 12.exd5 ♜xd5 13.♜f3 ♙d6



**14.♜f1!?**

By choosing a move that has not yet been thoroughly examined, Nepo creates another situation of theoretical interest. The question arises as to why he preferred to move the king instead of playing 14.♜xd5 with equal chances, as shown in the following examples:

**A) 14...♜xd5! 15.♙d2 ♜e7**

(15...f6 16.♜f3 ♜e7 17.♜d4 c5 18.♜e2 ♜g6 19.♜bc3 f5=, Korneev-Nataf, Evora 2006)

16.b4 ♜fd8 17.d4 ♜f5 18.c3 ♜e8 19.f3 f6 20.♜d3 ♙g3 21.♜f2 ♙d5 22.♜a3 h5 23.♜xe8+ ♜xe8 24.♜e1 ♜d8 25.♜e2 ♙d6 26.♜c2 ♙c4 27.♜e1 ♜g3

Black is a pawn down, but his active pieces (especially the bishop pair) ensure equal chances; Lounek-W.Richter, Internet 2018.

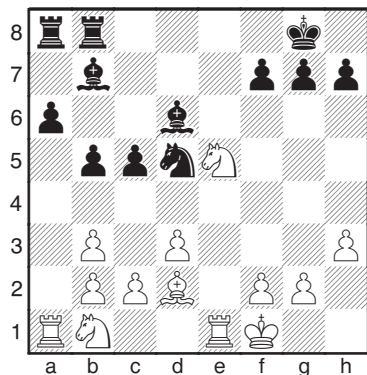
**B) 14...♙xd5 15.♜c3 ♙b7**

(15...♜fe8 16.♜xd5 ♜xd5 17.♜f3 ♜b4 18.♜xe8+ ♜xe8 19.♙d2 ♜xc2 20.♜xa6 ♙b4 21.♙c3 h5 22.♜f1±, Raidaru-Oeunmaa, correspondence 2008)

16.♜g4 ♜xg4 17.hxg4 ♙c8 18.g5 ♙b7 19.♙d2 and in the game Kutzner-Kuebart,

Berlin 2011, White kept his extra pawn and went on to win.

14...♖fb8 15.♔xd5 ♘xd5 16.♙d2 c5



17.♘f3

The fight has reached a critical moment. It's not clear why the challenger preferred to withdraw his active knight instead of playing the logical move 17.♘c3. In correspondence chess it has already been tested a little more closely, as shown in the following examples after 17...♗b4 18.♖ac1

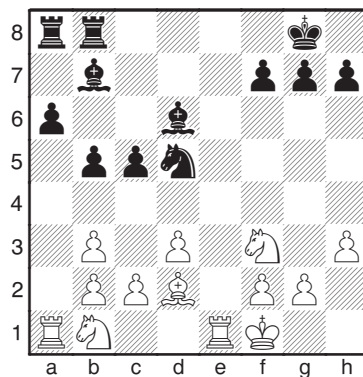
**A)** 18...f6 19.♘f3 ♖e8 (19...♔f7!? 20.♘e4 ♙f8∞) 20.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21.♘e2 ♗c6 22.♙f4 ♙xf4 23.♘xf4 ♔f7 24.♖e1 ♖c8 25.♖a1 ♖d8 26.♘e2 g6 27.♘e1 h5 28.h4 ♘e5 29.♔g1 g5 30.f4 gxf4 31.♘xf4 ♘g6 32.♘xg6 ♔xg6 33.♔f2 ♖e8 34.♘f3 ♔f5 35.♘g1 ♔g4 36.g3 f5 37.♘e2 with a better endgame, Schreuders-Neale, correspondence 2018.

**B)** 18...♖d8 19.♘g4 f5

(19...h5! with the possible continuation 20.♘e3 ♙f8 21.g4 hxg4 22.hxg4 g6= was stronger.)

20.♘e5 ♖ac8 21.♖e2 ♖e8 22.♘f3 ♖f8 23.♖e6 ♖fd8 24.♙g5 ♔f7 25.♖e3 ♖e8 26.♘e2 ♖xe3 27.♙xe3 ♙xf3 28.gxf3 ♙e5 29.d4 cxd4 30.♙xd4 ♘d3 31.♙xe5 ♘xc1 32.♘xc1 ♖xc2 33.♘e2 g6 34.♔e1 ♖c8

35.♙c3 ♖d8 36.b4± and in the game Bellegotti-Sychov, correspondence 2016, White went on to win.



17...♖d8

With this move, the opponents are breaking new ground.

In the correspondence game H.Schneider-W.Richter, Internet 2017, the continuation 17...♘b4 18.♙xb4 resulted in the opening of the c-file, which is more in Black's favor.

(Therefore, 18.♖c1!? deserves consideration.)

18...cxb4 19.c4

(19.♘bd2 ♖c8 20.♘e4 ♙f8 21.♖e2=)

After the further moves 19...♙xf3 20.gxf3 ♙f4 21.♔g2 f5 22.♖d1 ♖d8, White was struggling to activate his knight.

18.♘c3 ♘b4 19.♖ec1 ♖ac8 20.♘e2



*The protagonists' workplace*



*Before the beginning of the first game*

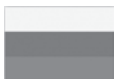


*The old and new World Champion – Magnus Carlsen*



# FIDE World Championship 2021

Ian Nepomniachtchi



vs. Magnus Carlsen



Game 1	Nepomniachtchi	½:½	Carlsen
Game 2	Carlsen	½:½	Nepomniachtchi
Game 3	Nepomniachtchi	½:½	Carlsen
Game 4	Carlsen	½:½	Nepomniachtchi
Game 5	Nepomniachtchi	½:½	Carlsen
Game 6	Carlsen	1:0	Nepomniachtchi
Game 7	Nepomniachtchi	½:½	Carlsen
Game 8	Carlsen	1:0	Nepomniachtchi
Game 9	Nepomniachtchi	0:1	Carlsen
Game 10	Carlsen	½:½	Nepomniachtchi
Game 11	Nepomniachtchi	0:1	Carlsen

## Final score:

Magnus Carlsen  
Norway

**7½ : 3½** Ian Nepomniachtchi  
Russia