

FIDE World Championship in Argentina!

Posted by fpawn on Wednesday, October 05 @ 06:53:22 CDT



Veselin Topalov

By NM Michael Aigner

The FIDE World Chess Championship has begun in San Luis, Argentina. Eight of the top Grandmasters compete in a double-round robin tournament, meaning that each person faces every other competitor twice. Each game can last up to 7 hours. This grueling event began on September 28 and concludes on October 15.

The winner of this tournament becomes the FIDE World Champion. What, exactly, this title means remains in dispute. GM Vladimir Kramnik retains the title of Classical World Chess Champion that he defended last year. Certainly chess fans around the world hope for a reunification of these titles, but whether such a match can be arranged remains to be seen.

Three players were considered favorites by the experts: GM Vishwanathan Anand, GM Veselin Topalov and GM Peter Leko. They are also the three highest rated players in the world behind the now-retired Kasparov. Next follow GM Peter Svidler, GM Judit Polgar, GM Michael Adams and GM Alexander Morozevich. The final player is the reigning FIDE Champion GM Rustam Kasimdzhanov.

Anand (2788 FIDE) is currently the highest rated active player in the world (post Kasparov era). The Indian native has been ranked in the top 3 of the world since the mid 1990s. He had his chance at the World Championship once before, losing to Kasparov 10.5-7.5 in 1995 in a match sanctioned by the PCA. He is technically very strong and has more than once been anointed the successor to Kasparov. Until now, he was unable to fill those expectations.

Topalov (2782 FIDE) is ranked right behind Anand. Moreover, he has been on fire in 2005, including defeating Kasparov in the latter's last game as a professional chess player. He shared first place in the Linares super tournament with Kasparov. The Bulgarian exhibits a fighting playing style that demands declining early draws and even accepting the occasional defeat in the hope of earning victories.

Leko (2751 FIDE) holds the #3 ranking in the world among active players. The Hungarian was a child prodigy, becoming the world's youngest Grandmaster at age 14, a record that has since been broken several times. Last year, Leko played against Kramnik for the classical World Championship and tied 7.0-7.0. The defending champion, Kramnik, retained his title. Leko started out well in 2005, winning the Wijk aan Zee super tournament ahead of Anand and Topalov.

Svidler (2740 FIDE) hails from Russia. He is in some ways an outsider because he hasn't played in the annual super tournaments at Wijk aan Zee and Linares as often as some of the others. Nonetheless, he is a force to be reckoned with.

Polgar (2735 FIDE) is by far the highest rated woman in the world. Like Leko, she was born in Hungary and became a Grandmaster (full GM title, not just WGM) at the age of 14. Today she is rated over 150 points above any other woman in the world. She now becomes the first ever woman to compete for the (male) World Championship.

Adams (2718 FIDE) has a reputation for being solid and effective, but never spectacular. The British #1 has been among the world elite for about as long as Anand, but he has never had the opportunity to play a match for the World Championship. Maybe this is his opportunity.

Morozevich (2707 FIDE) is in many ways the opposite of Adams. He prefers to shun mainstream opening theory and relies on his creative play to find moves that even his fellow Grandmaster sometimes can't understand. It comes as no surprise that this Russian has earned the nickname "Weird Al."

Kasimdzhanov (2670 FIDE) is clearly the underdog in this tournament, ranked only #35 in the world. The native of Uzbekistan won the 2004 FIDE Championship (knockout tournament) in Libya, thereby earning an invitation to Argentina as the defending champion. He probably won't win again, but he can prove that he belongs among the world's elite players.

The first six rounds have been played and a clear leader has emerged. Topalov has blown away the competition so far, scoring a mind-boggling 5.5 out of 6 for a performance rating of 3157! Even more amazing, Topalov has scored a perfect 4-0 with the black pieces, ignoring Grandmaster conventional wisdom to play conservatively as black. Topalov's lone blemish was a wild draw against Anand in round 2, a game in which the Bulgarian had multiple chances to win. He now stands two full points ahead of his nearest competitors, Anand and Svidler.

1. 5.5 GM Veselin Topalov (Bulgaria 2782)
2. 3.5 GM Viswanathan Anand (India 2788)
3. 3.5 GM Peter Svidler (Russia 2740)
4. 3.0 GM Rustam Kasimdzhanov (Uzbekistan 2670)
5. 2.5 GM Peter Leko (Hungary 2751)
6. 2.0 GM Judit Polgar (Hungary 2735)
6. 2.0 GM Michael Adams (England 2718)
6. 2.0 GM Alexander Morozevich (Russia 2707)

The official website for the FIDE World Chess Championship in San Luis, Argentina, is: <http://www.wccsanluis.net/>

For extensive daily coverage of the tournament, check out the ChessBase news site at: <http://www.chessbase.com/>

The following photos are from the ChessBase website. They are credited to Casto Abundo, working for FIDE.



Topalov (white) versus Anand in round 2.



Svidler (white) vs Leko in round 3.



Adams (white) vs Kasimdzhanov in round 5.



Judit Polgar