

## Champions Showdown: Chess 9LX 2022

By John Brezina



Arbiter Chris Bird watching the games

Round one and three decisive games. A tough start for Hikaru Nakamura as he lost his game to Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. Both Peter Svidler and Garry Kasparov also lost their first games, back to the drawing board. Fabiano Caruana and Alireza Firouzja started the tournament with their game drawn but they would both see each other again in an incredible playoff match. Day one ended with a perfect score for Ian Nepomniachtchi and Fabiano on his heels with 2.5 points. A scoreless day for both Peter & Garry despite their collaborations before each round. Day two and round four started off with victories for Ian, Hikaru, Alireza and Shakhriyar. Nepomniachtchi undefeated and in the clear lead, then faltered with a huge defeat by Alireza Firouzja which put them at a tie. Then Shakhriyar delivered another blow to Ian in round six with his third victory of the day. By the end of day two, Firouzja and Mamedyarov were leaders tied for first with 4.5 points. Alireza the only player to still be undefeated while the opposite for Garry Kasparov, still scoreless after six rounds.



13th World Champion Garry Kasparov



Tournament winner Fabiano Caruana

Round nine was intense as first place was still up for grabs by four players. On the other end was a still scoreless Kasparov, something I have never witnessed before. He ended the tournament finally with half a point after drawing with Svidler. Levon Aronian held Nepomniachtchi to a draw and Dominguez did the same with Mamedyarov. But Fabiano Caruana pressed Wesley So and won the game, pressuring Firouzja to win in order to secure the title. So after seeing the other games end, he agreed to a draw in his tough game with Nakamura, setting up a playoff between Caruana and Firouzja. What an accomplishment for Firouzja after his previous two tournament wins.



Analyzing the new starting position

The first two games would be the same random position setup for each player with both colors at G10+2. Caruana, playing black in game one, pressured Firouzja and handed him his first loss in the tournament. Then in game two, a must win with the black pieces, Firouzja repaid the loss to Caruana setting up an incredibly difficult armageddon game. Fabiano chose white getting five minutes while Alireza had four minutes but draw odds, reasoning that he feared flagging against the very quick Alireza. Another random position was chosen and not much time to calculate over the board. Fabiano steered into the endgame a pawn up and nursed his pawn to the seventh rank and zugzwanged Alireza, winning the 9LX tournament with just seconds on both players' clocks. Congratulations to Fabiano Caruana and Alireza Firouzja after both competing in all three exhausting tournaments.

Enjoy pictures from the event in the links below.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/hGd85cLWyyXBj69r9>

<https://parkerchessclub.godaddysites.com/f/2022-champions-showdown-chess-9lx>