



**For more information, contact:**  
Rebecca Buffington  
Saint Louis Chess Club  
(314) 277-3930  
[rbuffington@saintlouischessclub.org](mailto:rbuffington@saintlouischessclub.org)

*For Immediate Release*

**Chess Champions Crowned at 2019 Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz and Sinquefield Cup**  
*Armenian Grandmaster Levon Aronian Claims Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz Title;*  
*Chinese Grandmaster Ding Liren wins the Sinquefield Cup*

**SAINT LOUIS (August 29, 2019)** – This August, 10 of the world’s best chess grandmasters participated in the Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz and 12 of the top chess grandmasters competed in the Sinquefield Cup at the Saint Louis Chess Club. The tournaments, with a total \$475,000 prize pool, were fourth and fifth in the seven-event regular season on the Grand Chess Tour.

Kicking off on August 10, the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz tournament featured three days of three-round rapid competition followed by two days of nine-round blitz chess. Running from August 17-29, the Sinquefield Cup expanded to 11 rounds for the first time this year, and featured each of the competitors who ended 2018’s event in a three-way tie: World Champion Magnus Carlsen and Grandmasters Fabiano Caruana and Levon Aronian.

Levon Aronian was named this year’s champion of the Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz, while Ding Liren emerged victorious at the Sinquefield Cup.

**Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz**

Players arrived at the Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz eager to compete as last year’s winner Hikaru Nakamura did not return to defend his title. Armenian GM Levon Aronian started strong and led after the first two days of play, but lost his momentum and ended day three tied with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave at thirteen points each heading into the blitz portion. After nine rounds of blitz, Vachier-Lagrave leapfrogged to lead by half a point but was bested by Levon Aronian in the final day.

Aronian was crowned the winner of the 2019 Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz and collected \$37,500 and 13 tour points. This is the second win for Aronian since the inception of the tournament in 2017 and his first rapid & blitz event of the tour, making him strongly positioned for the London finals. The total prize fund was \$150,000.

“It was truly an exciting event, I love playing in the city of Saint Louis where we are loved and proud to be chess players. The event was very interesting and there was a lot of excitement; it’s a good warm up for the Sinquefield Cup. I am excited to once again have the opportunity to compete against the best chess players in the world,” said Aronian at the tournament closing ceremony.

### **Sinquefield Cup**

Following the Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz, seven of the tournament’s twelve grandmasters returned for the Sinquefield Cup, including No. 1-3 Grandmasters Magnus Carlsen, Fabiano Caruana and Ding Liren of China. The tournament featured an increased prize fund of \$325,000, as well as arguably the most talented pool of grandmasters to grace Saint Louis in 2019.

After eight exciting rounds, there was a five-way tie for first place. Sergey Karjakin and Ian Nepomniachtchi joined the leaders with wins over Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Levon Aronian respectively, while the rest of the leaders drew their games. Trio Magnus Carlsen, Wesley So and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov trailed half a point behind. After day ten, Ding Liren arose as the sole leader of the tournament.

For the first time in the Sinquefield Cup history, the winner was determined in a playoff. In a last round victory, Magnus Carlsen tied for first place with Ding Liren who only managed to draw his game. The playoff began with two 25-minute rapid games which ended in a draw. After that the players moved on to blitz, Liren won the first blitz game on time and forced a resignation from the World Champion with spectacular tactics in the second game ultimately clinching the tournament win.

“He was a lot better than I was today, he deserved the win today. I managed to salvage quite a bit in the last few days, I would have loved to win but ultimately I am not that sad about it,” said World Champion, Magnus Carlsen

“The level of excitement going into the playoff is what makes these tournaments so great. In the history of the Sinquefield Cup no single player has won the title more than once. We congratulate Ding Liren on this exciting win,” Tony Rich, Executive Director of the Saint Louis Chess Club

Liren emerged victorious in the playoff, taking down World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen to claim his first-ever Sinquefield Cup victory. He also became the first-ever Chinese grandmaster to win the title. “I was very pleased to play in the final game against World Champion Magnus Carlsen. I did not expect to win the Sinquefield Cup but after last week’s rest day I started to consider that it might be a possibility to win the tournament. I was hoping to place in the tournament but I could not really believe I would be tied for first until today’s playoff. Today was one of the greatest achievements in my career, said Liren in his post-tournament interview.

Two more Grand Chess Tour events are coming up before the finals in London – the Superbet Rapid & Blitz tournament from November 6-10 in Bucharest, Romania and the Tata Steel Rapid & Blitz tournament from November 22-26 in Kolkata, India. Moving into the final two tournaments, Carlsen, Liren and Vachier-Lagrave round out the top three, with Aronian, Caruana and Sergey Karjakin in a three-way tie for fourth place.

The Grand Chess Tour title will feature three-day semifinals and finals – each in classical, rapid, and blitz style – and will be broadcast live at [www.grandchesstour.org](http://www.grandchesstour.org).

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### **About The Saint Louis Chess Club**

The Saint Louis Chess Club is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that is committed to making chess an important part of our community. In addition to providing a forum for the community to play tournaments and casual games, the club also offers chess improvement classes, beginner lessons and special lectures.

Recognizing the cognitive and behavioral benefits of chess, the Saint Louis Chess Club is committed to supporting those chess programs that already exist in area schools while encouraging the development of new in-school and after-school programs. For more information, visit [www.saintlouischessclub.org](http://www.saintlouischessclub.org).

### **About The Grand Chess Tour**

The Grand Chess Tour is a circuit of international events, each demonstrating the highest level of organization for the world's best players. The Tour was created in partnership between the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis (Sinquefeld Cup) and Chess Promotions, Ltd. (London Chess Classic). The legendary Garry Kasparov, one of the world's greatest ambassadors for chess, inspired the Grand Chess Tour and helped solidify the partnership between the organizers.