

April 9, 2019

For Immediate Release
CIV Rapid & Blitz - Playing Venue, Schedule and Parallel Events

Saint Louis, MO, April 9, 2019 – The Cote d'Ivoire Rapid & Blitz is the first leg of the 2019 Grand Chess Tour and is scheduled to be held in Abidjan from May 8 until May 12, 2019. The tournament has special significance as it will be the first GCT tournament to be held on the African continent. It will also mark the official return of World Champion Magnus Carlsen as a full tour participant. The participation of GM Carlsen also represents a significant milestone for the development of chess on the African continent as the event will be the first African tournament in history to include the reigning World Champion amongst its participants.

Following a robust selection process, the Grand Chess Tour is pleased to announce that the Pullman Abidjan Hotel has been selected as the official hotel and playing venue for the tournament. Located in the heart of the Plateau (Abidjan's business district), the hotel is a newly renovated luxury 5-star location.

The tournament will feature seven full tour participants and three event level wildcards.

#	Players	URS Rating ¹	URS Rank ¹	Notes
1	Carlsen, Magnus	2858	1	World Champion
2	Nakamura, Hikaru	2804	2	2018 GCT Champion
3	Vachier-Lagrave, Maxime	2792	3	2018 GCT Runner-up
4	Ding, Liren	2786	5	#1 ranked player in China
5	So, Wesley	2777	8	2017 GCT Champion
6	Nepomniachtchi, Ian	2777	9	#1 ranked player in Russia
7	Karjakin, Sergey	2772	11	2016 World Champion Challenger
8	Veselin Topalov (Wildcard)	2734	22	Former FIDE World Champion
9	Wei Yei (Wildcard)	2735	23	#1 ranked junior (U/20) in the world
10	Bassem Amin (Wildcard)	2686	60	#1 ranked player from Africa

The event format consists of 9 rounds of rapid chess and 18 rounds of blitz chess with the final standings determined by the results of both formats. The rapid games will be played at a time control of game in twenty-five (25) minutes, with a ten (10) second delay from move 1. The time control for the blitz games is game in five (5) minutes, with a three (3) second delay from move 1. The start time for the daily games are as follows:

Rapid (May 8 – 10)

Time (GMT)	May 8	May 9	May 10
15.00	Rapid - Round 1	Rapid - Round 4	Rapid - Round 7
16.30	Rapid - Round 2	Rapid - Round 5	Rapid - Round 8
18.00	Rapid - Round 3	Rapid - Round 6	Rapid - Round 9

¹ Rankings provided are per the Universal Rating System as at April 1, 2019

Blitz (May 11 – 12)

May 11	Time (GMT)	May 12	Time (GMT)
Blitz - Round 1	15.00	Blitz - Round 10	14.00
Blitz - Round 2	15.30	Blitz - Round 11	14.30
Blitz - Round 3	16.00	Blitz - Round 12	15.00
Blitz - Round 4	16.30	Blitz - Round 13	15.30
Blitz - Round 5	17.00	Blitz - Round 14	16.00
Blitz - Round 6	17.30	Blitz - Round 15	16.30
Blitz - Round 7	18.00	Blitz - Round 16	17.00
Blitz - Round 8	18.30	Blitz - Round 17	17.30
Blitz - Round 9	19.00	Blitz - Round 18	18.00
Blitz Day 1 End	19.30	Playoffs / Prizegiving	18.30

In keeping with the development goals of the Grand Chess Tour, several parallel events are also being planned by the Fédération Ivoirienne des Echecs (FIDEC). These events will maximise the contribution of the tournament to both the local chess community and the member states of the ECOWAS region. ECOWAS is an economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa and teams from the various member states will be invited to Abidjan to participate in an invitational team tournament that will run in parallel with the Grand Chess Tour event. This will provide an opportunity for players from across West Africa to meet with the top players in the world and to watch their games live.

The Cote d'Ivoire rapid & blitz tournament has ultimately been made possible through the ongoing financial support of the French mass media conglomerate Vivendi SA as well as the Canal+ Group. Both organisations have been key supporters of the Paris Grand Chess Tour tournament for the past two years and have significant operations spanning across the African continent. Thanks to their involvement, a two-part french language documentary is also scheduled to be produced and is expected to air later this year. The proposed documentary will feature both the rapid and blitz tournament in Abidjan as well as the GCT event in Paris in July. Further details on the event in Cote d'Ivoire can be obtained from the [tournament page](#) on the Grand Chess Tour website.

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About the Grand Chess Tour (<http://grandchesstour.org>)

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 St Louis Chess Club (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.

About Vivendi SA

Vivendi SA is a French mass media conglomerate headquartered in Paris. The company has activities in music, television, film, video games, book publishing, telecommunications, tickets and video hosting service.

About Canal+ Group

Canal+ Group is the leading French audio-visual media group and a top player in the production of pay TV and theme channels and the bundling and distribution of pay TV services.

About Fédération Ivoirienne des Echecs

The Fédération Ivoirienne des Echecs (FIDEC) is the official chess federation of Cote d'Ivoire and is responsible for promoting chess within the country. The federation has been affiliated with the World Chess Federation (FIDE) since 2001 and with the Association Internationale des Echecs Francophones (AIDEF) since 2013.

About the Pullman Abidjan Hotel

The Pullman Abidjan Hotel is a newly renovated 5-star hotel offering 265 contemporary rooms including 20 suites with breathtaking views of the lagoon Ebrié. Perfect for business travelers, the Pullman Abidjan has several modular meeting rooms equipped with new technologies and offers a mixture of French and African specialties in their high-quality in-house restaurant.

Grand Chess Tour

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