

January 24, 2019

For Immediate Release

2019 GCT to expand to twelve full tour participants, eight events and a \$1.75 million prize fund

Saint Louis, MO, January 24, 2019 – The fifth edition of the Grand Chess Tour (GCT) will see the tour expand to eight tournaments and increase the number of full tour participants to twelve. The tour will also welcome fourteen event level wildcards in 2019. Tour participants will fight for a record prize fund of \$1.75 million as the GCT expands its reach to four continents to include tournaments in Africa, Asia, Europe and America. The prize money on offer for the classical tournaments has been increased to \$325,000 per event (\$90,000 for 1st place and \$60,000 for 2nd) while the prize fund for the GCT Finals in London will also be raised to \$350,000 (\$150,000 for 1st place and \$100,000 for 2nd).

The new tournaments will be in Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire), Kolkata (India), Bucharest (Romania) and Zagreb (Croatia). Major sponsors already confirmed for the 2019 season include Vivendi SA, Colliers International, Tata Steel India, St Louis Chess Club and Superbet Group. Gameplan Sports have been appointed as the official sponsorship and branding partner of the tour.

Croatia GCT and the Sinquefield Cup will be classical tournaments with five rapid and blitz tournaments to be held in Abidjan, Paris, St Louis, Bucharest and Kolkata. The GCT Finals will once again be held in London as part of the 2019 London Chess Classic.

The twelve full tour participants will play in both classical events as well as in three of the five rapid and blitz tournaments. The classical events will be expanded to eleven-rounds while the rapid and blitz events will all use the GCT's traditional ten player formats.

The full schedule for the 2019 regular season (including arrival and departure days) is as follows:

1. Cote d'Ivoire Rapid & Blitz, May 6 - 13, 2019, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire
2. Croatia GCT (Classical), June 24 - July 9, 2019, Zagreb, Croatia
3. Paris Rapid & Blitz, July 26 - August 2, 2019, Paris, France
4. St Louis Rapid & Blitz, August 8 - 15, 2019, St. Louis, Missouri USA
5. Sinquefield Cup (Classical), August 15 - 30, 2019, St. Louis, Missouri USA
6. Superbet Rapid & Blitz, November 4 - 11, 2019, Bucharest, Romania
7. Tata Steel India Rapid & Blitz, November 20 - 27, 2019, Kolkata, India

The top four players by cumulative score will qualify for the 2019 GCT Finals which will be held during the London Chess Classic in London, UK between November 30 and December 10, 2019.

Full Tour Participants

The initial list of twelve players that have been invited to participate as full tour participants is as follows. All ratings listed are from the respective ratings lists as at 1 January 2019.

#	Name	FED	URS (Rank)	FIDE (Rank)
1	Carlsen, Magnus	NOR	2859 (1)	2835 (1)
2	Nakamura, Hikaru	USA	2806 (2)	2749 (16)
3	Vachier-Lagrave, Maxime	FRA	2796 (3)	2780 (6)
4	Caruana, Fabiano	USA	2794 (4)	2828 (2)
5	Mamedyarov, Shakhriyar	AZE	2792 (5)	2817 (3)
6	Ding, Liren	CHN	2788 (6)	2813 (4)
7	Aronian, Levon	ARM	2782 (7)	2783 (5)
8	So, Wesley	USA	2779 (8)	2765 (11)
9	Nepomniachtchi, Ian	RUS	2778 (9)	2763 (13)
10	Kramnik, Vladimir	RUS	2768 (13)	2777 (7)
11	Giri, Anish	NED	2765 (14)	2783 (5)
12	Anand, Viswanathan	IND	2761 (16)	2773 (8)

In addition, two alternates have been selected and will be offered full tour participant contracts if any of the twelve players above decline their invitations for any reason.

Alternates

#	Player	FED	URS (Rank)	FIDE (Rank)
1	Karjakin, Sergey	RUS	2776 (10)	2753 (15)
2	Yu, Yangyi	CHN	2775 (11)	2764 (12)

The initial list of twelve invited players were selected in line with the following process:

#s	Selection Methodology	Notes	Players
1 - 3	2018 GCT Tour Standings	The top three finishes from the 2018 Grand Chess Tour	Nakamura, Vachier-Lagrave, Caruana
4 - 7	Universal Rating System	Top 4 (not already selected) based on the Universal Rating List as at 1 January 2018	Carlsen, Mamedyarov, Ding, Aronian
8 - 11	Average FIDE Classical Rating	Top 4 (not already selected) based on the average of the 12 monthly FIDE classical ratings for the period from 1 February 2017 until 1 January 2018	Kramnik, Giri, So, Anand
12	GCT Advisory Board Nominee	Selected by the GCT Advisory Board	Nepomniachtchi

Both the GCT Advisory Board Nominee and the two alternates were selected by the GCT Advisory Board as the next highest rated players on the URS™ rating list (as at January 1, 2019) that had not already been selected.

GCT Tour Points

GCT Tour Points will once again be awarded based on the final rank of each player in the events in which they participate. Tour Points will be shared equally in the event of ties for any position, but a tiebreak will be played in all events if required to determine the overall event winners. Tiebreaks for first place will determine the champion where required and will also be relevant in the distribution of final prize moneys in the manner as specified in the GCT tiebreak regulations.

Place	Classical Events	Rapid & Blitz Events (based on combined standings)
1 st	18 / 20*	12 / 13*
2 nd	15	10
3 rd	12	8
4 th	10	7
5 th	8	6
6 th	7	5
7 th	6	4
8 th	5	3
9 th	4	2
10 th	3	1
11 th	2	N/A
12 th	1	N/A

** Any player who wins an Event outright (without the need for a playoff) shall earn two extra Tour Points in the Classical Events and one extra Tour Point in the Rapid & Blitz events.*

Time Controls

To promote fighting chess, all GCT classical games in 2019 will use a time control of Game in One Hundred and Thirty Minutes (130) Minutes with a thirty (30) second delay per move from move 1.

The time controls for the rapid and blitz events remain unchanged from the formats used in 2019 and will see all rapid games played at a rate of game in 25 minutes with a 10 second delay from move 1 and all blitz games played at a rate of game in 5 minutes with a 3 second delay from move 1.

Competitive play

No draw offers will be permitted in any of the classical games for the 2019 Grand Chess Tour.

GCT Chief Arbiter

IA David Sedgwick has been reappointed as the GCT Chief Arbiter for 2019.

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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 the URS™ (<http://universalrating.com>)

The Universal Rating System (URS™), is a revolutionary new sport's rating system designed to assess the relative strength of participants across a wide variety of competitor vs competitor sports or games. The URS™ was developed as the result of a collaborative research project funded by the Grand Chess Tour, the Kasparov Chess Foundation and the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis. The system is the product of detailed research conducted over more than two years by some of the world's leading experts in methods of rating chess players.

About Gameplan Sports Pvt. Ltd. (<http://gameplan.co.in/>)

Set up in 1998, Gameplan Sports Pvt. Ltd. is one of India's foremost corporate branding agencies, working primarily in the fields of sports and literature. The company presents innovative and cost-effective ideas that give sponsors maximum exposure. Key activities include marketing and management of international and domestic sponsorship rights in India; marketing and management of Indian and international cricket tournaments, player endorsements, syndicating content in print and electronic media, in-stadia advertising, 3-D signs, event management, event promotions, hospitality and memorabilia.

Grand Chess Tour



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