Russia and China claim gold!
Round 11 interim report:

China and Russia claim gold!

The Russian women team won the women’s section for the third time in a row.

Photo: David Llada/ COT2014

The leaders in both divisions turned up looking confident, the Russian women in particular, who were dressed for success, giving off a celebratory air. The Chinese men’s team were energetic on the board, and they looked intent on guaranteeing themselves the long coveted gold medal, Liren Ding and Yangyi Yu hitting fast and hard on boards two and three. Ding put China ahead in the third hour, and a 3-1 win and Olympiad gold at last seemed just a matter of time.

By GM Jonathan Tisdall

And so it proved! China could settle their nerves as Ding Liren’s board two win over Grzegorz Gajewski was followed by draws on top and bottom boards. The one remaining game was an absolutely unloseable bishops of opposite colors ending where hot man Yangyi Yu had all the chances and eventually brought home the bacon to give the majestic Chinese men’s team a first Olympiad gold.

All of the matches between medal candidates were open, but the USA had some setbacks - first board Nakamura appeared to be losing against Azerbaijan, and their ‘bottom gun’, Sam Shankland, could not convert an advantage against Eltaj Safarli on board four - this result means that the US GM had to ‘settle’ for a final personal score of 9/10.

India supporters noted that the not completely outlandish combination of a China win, draws in the Russia-France and Azerbaijan-USA matches, and an Indian win over Uzbekistan would bring them a medal. The first part quickly looked
plausible, and the other matches were predictably close and tense.

Armenia–Czech Republic was a tough last round match with a heavyweight battle on first board. Both teams had hopes for a better result in Tromsø, and although Levon Aronian ended the event with a powerful win over David Navara he was far from satisfied.

Tarjei J. Svensen talked to the world no. 2 afterwards, with Aronian giving a brief response when asked to describe Armenia’s performance in Tromsø:

**Levon Aronian:** Dreadful!

**What about your own performance?**

Very average.

**Do you have any explanation for the result of the Armenian team?**

I think we were missing too many chances. After we played quite badly against France we kind of continued. We started playing strong teams early on, which is normally bad for our team because we are slow starters. We need some time to warm up. If you look at the tournaments that we played, every time we’ve played somebody strong early on, normally the tournament didn’t end so well for us.

**How did you like Tromsø?**

I love it here. I was here a year ago and I like being in Norway. In general it fits my needs.

**And how did you like the organization?**

I think it was okay. I would be lying if I said it was perfect, but it was okay.

**What did you like and what did you not like?**

Generally it’s a bit too hot in the playing hall. That’s one of the problems. I like that every Olympiad is a celebration and Tromsø is a lovely place and I like that we were not playing somewhere outside the city in some boring place. We were in the middle of the town, so that was good.

Tarjei also had a chance to talk to the other side:

**How would you sum up the tournament for the Czech team?**

**David Navara:** Unfortunately the tournament did not end very well. We are playing against Armenia, but I lost very quickly so we are disappointed. We were playing quite well in the first seven rounds, but then it became worse and our result depends on the outcome of the final match.

**What about your own performance in Tromsø?**

Up to a certain moment it was almost perfect, but since then rather bad. If you combine this, it’s still a decent result, but nothing special.

**How did you like Tromsø, and the organization here?**

I like Tromsø. Frankly speaking, some things could be organized better – for example the rest rooms were not perfect – but I liked this Olympiad, as I liked most of the other Olympiads.

**Three in a row for Russia**

The Russian women did not open as strongly as the Chinese men, and the matches in the women’s section were still up for grabs in the third hour of play, with Bulgaria definitely having chances to produce the most dramatic of last round upsets against the leaders.

Alexandra Kosteniuk always looked like delivering a full point for the leaders, but the Bulgarians had good winning chances on the top two boards. GM Valentina Gunina conjured up a winning attack from a not completely convincing position on board two to seize control of the match for Russia, and when the bottom board was drawn the first official team medals of the event were recorded.

The chasing Chinese had their hands full with the third seeds, Ukraine, but gradually took over the initiative on the middle boards in a match that’s still too close to call.

Elsewhere the Germans were locked in a sharp battle with 4th seeds Georgia, but their chances to leap into the medals list looked grim as they had uphill climbs on several boards, and Georgia drew first blood with a win on second board from IM Lela Javakhishvili.

Spain had an outside chance of medals after an impressive tournament, but things quickly went wrong against Armenia, with María Kursova winning a miniature against Amalia Aranaz – it could have been over even sooner (see annotated games)
Olympiad wrap-up:

India snatch bronze

By GM Jonathan Tisdall

The 2014 Chess Olympiad in Tromsø is over. As we reported in our interim report, the Chinese men and the Russian women made short work of securing their predicted golds. That still left a lot to be decided, though, both in terms of teams and individual medals. In a final session that was overshadowed by the tragic collapse of a player from the Seychelles (and an ensuing panic that saw many players flee for the exit), Hungary eventually took silver in the men’s section. The bronze medal was a tiebreak cliffhanger, with India sensationally edging out Russia and Azerbaijan after beating Uzbekistan 3.5:0.5. In the women’s event China took silver and Ukraine bronze, after drawing their match today.

Two by four

China's quickfire victory over Poland left them a full two points ahead of the field, but while their chess looked nerveless you only had to see their reaction afterwards to realise how much it meant to them.

That still left everything to play for, and in the end there was a log-jam on 17 points, with four teams left biting their nails as the tiebreaks were finalised. The first team to reach the 17-point mark was Azerbaijan, who edged out the USA thanks to Shakhriyar Mamedyarov’s first board win over Hikaru Nakamura.

Hungary, who entered the round in sole second, were reduced to hoping that their board two, Csaba Balogh, would hold a grimly passive knight ending and leave them in the medals pool. Only a win by Pavel Eljanov in that ending would be enough for Ukraine to reach 17 points - but the Hungarian GM did his job, and his team joined the tiebreak sweepstakes. They would be richly-rewarded in the final Olympiad for the retiring Judit Polgar.

Top seeded Russia drew their white games against 3rd ranked France, but the favorites ground away with black, gaining the upper hand on the bottom board, still straining for a result that would add them to the medals tiebreak mix. Ian Nepomniachtchi finally brought home the only full point of the match, and Russia’s comeback was complete.

The surprising Indians, seeded 19th and entering the event without their star players Vishy Anand and Pindyala Harikrishna, pulled off a massive 3.5-0.5 rout against the last of the big upstarts, 33rd ranked Uzbekistan. Would it be enough? The answer was a resounding yes, with Hungary finishing 2nd, India 3rd and the heavy-hitting Russia and Azerbaijan leaving Norway empty-handed. The fact that the only Top 10 seeded team that India encountered were 4th seeds Armenia (a 2-2 draw) may provide ammunition for critics of the tiebreak and pairing system.

Men’s individual results

Although the Olympiad is a team event chess is an individual sport and we’re always fascinated by individual results. So who stood out at the Olympiad? Let’s look at the medalists board by board:

Board 1: Bulgaria may have ended badly after a fine start, but Veselin Topalov was back in the form of old, not even letting a loss to Vladimir Kramnik get him down. Anish Giri moved up to no. 11 in the world on the live ratings.

Board 2: 7 wins and three draws for Ngoc Truong son Nguyen couldn’t lift the Vietnamese team above expectations, but Csaba Balogh was the powerhouse behind Hungary’s surge to silver, meaning the Hungarian captain could contemplate leaving out Judit Polgar.

Board 3: Yu Yangyi had the best performance rating of anyone in the Olympiad and gained 32 rating points. In the final round he defeated 16-year-old Jan-Krzysztof Duda, who had also been having a phenomenal event.

Board 5: Ian Nepomniachtchi completely justified the faith put in him when he was selected ahead of Dmitry Jakovenko despite a disastrous outing in his last event, even if his final round win wasn’t quite enough to rescue Russia’s tournament.
Sam Shankland, meanwhile, talked to Tarjei J. Svensen after playing the tournament of his life:

**What can you say about USA's performance in this event?**

It’s a shame we never got to fight for gold. I think we could’ve done better, but you can only control what you can control. Hopefully next time we will do better.

**And your own performance has been amazing, how did that happen?**

After I played in Edmonton, Ivanchuk won the tournament with 8 out of 9. But I was telling a friend of mine who doesn’t play chess about it and he replied, ’8 out of 9, why is that so impressive? Couldn’t he go 9?’ I said, ’Nobody ever gets 9 points in one event!’ I’ve never been happier to be corrected. 9 out of 10, I am just so happy. It’s fair. I think I should have won today, but I also think I should have lost the game I drew. It’s a fair result on the whole. I’m pretty happy – I’m going to get a medal and a lot of rating points.

**Are you surprised yourself by your score?**

Of course. If someone had told me... there’s a reason I’m not 2900. I didn’t expect to play a 2900 performance. I just wanted to play at my best, and it’s been great.

**How did you find the city and the organization and everything? Did any of that contribute to your result?**

I’m not sure exactly. I mean, it’s lovely here, but it’s my first Olympiad so I don’t have anything to compare it to. The only thing I have to complain about is the ridiculous prices in Norway. But that’s absolutely not the organisers’ fault. Everything else they did great.

Shankland is already heading on his way to Latvia where Riga Open starts tomorrow.

**China held again, but hold on for silver**

In the women’s event Ukraine left it late, but fought tenaciously for their medal chances, with Natalia Zhukova top-scoring on Board 4.

The top-seeded Chinese women were unable to break Ukraine down, and a 2-2 all draws tie meant that both teams ended on 18 points. When Georgia battered the fourth place German squad the medal nations were clear - but would the tiebreak edge for China stand up to the final round of results, and at least give them the silver?

Or would the events of the 11th round boost the Ukraine above the bronze medals? The answer was no – China held on for silver.

That was still a disappointment for World Champion Hou Yifan’s hopes of winning a first gold medal with China, but at least the first and second places in the Open and Women’s sections ensured China ran away with the overall Gaprindashvili Cup (Russia were second, Ukraine third).

**Individual results**

It’s no surprise, of course, to see that World Champion Hou Yifan made the medals table, but Pia Cramling’s 10/11 is an extraordinary feat for a 51-year-old, even one of her legendary chess longevity. The one controversy on this list is the fact that Nana Dzagnidze (7 wins, 2 draws) didn’t risk her performance rating by playing the final round - though her team’s 4:0 rout of Germany defused that bomb!

Valentina Gunina took gold on Board 2, while Alexandra Kosteniuk did the same on Board 3, powering the Russian women to overall victory - all the board medalists can be found on the official website.

**Notable results**

The list of medals does not tell all the stories of the Olympiad, and there are surely more hidden in the vast array of statistics for the event. Most chess players love a good rummage in the tables of numbers that catalog the tournament’s adventures.

English GM Jonathan Speelman pointed out the impressive performance of young untitled Cypriot Andreas Kelires, who scored a GM norm with 7 wins and 4 draws, and 13-year-old Australian FM Anton Smirnov completed his IM title in Tromso, getting the needed rating points and adding a fourth norm to his collection. Padmini Rout won the women’s fifth board goal medal to spread some Indian Olympiad joy to the women’s team, while a special shout out should go to Egypt - they won category prizes in both the Open and Women’s sections!

**Local news**

In the end, it was not the easiest task to find a positive spin on the Norwegian Open team’s performance here. With Magnus Carlsen, pumped up crowds and immense TV coverage, expectations were exospheric, with top ten and possible medals being discussed by somewhat overheated national media. The pressure seemed
to be too much; thanks to a last round blanking of Malaysia, Norway 1 soared up the table to a still disappointing 29th, and the best thing that could be said is that this was at least the top Nordic result.

Norway’s top women could make the same claim, and with more pride. Ranked 38th, they were also the top Nordic team in their event, finishing 25th after beating Montenegro 3:1 in the final round.

We shouldn’t leave the local news without another mention of Norway 2 - four of the five performed markedly above their ratings, first board Frode Urkedal beat Ivanchuk and narrowly missed taking his final GM norm, and Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen had a Norwegian rating performance only bettered by Magnus Carlsen. They drew against second seeds Ukraine and lost to favorites Russia by the smallest margin. There are advantages to being away from the spotlights.

All that remained before bidding farewell to the 2014 Olympiad was the closing ceremony, and the handing out of well-earned rewards.

Annotated games

By GM Einar Gausel

Levon Aronian (2805) -
David Navara (2716)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.36), 14.08.2014

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.Qc3 Qf6
5.Qf4 Qc6 6.e3 f5 7.hb3 a5 8.a4+
Qd7 9.Qc2 c5 10.Qf3 Qe7 11.b3 Qc6
12.a3 Qh5 13.b3 Qf5 14.b4 Qc8 15.h3
Qxf4 16.Qxf4 Qb6 17.Qd1 f5 18.b5 Qd6
19.g3 a5 20.Qxd7+ Qxd7 21.0-0 Qhe8
22.Qd3 Qc4 23.Qa4 Qc6 24.Qc3

24...b5?
Black is still in the game after 24...b6 since 25.b3 is met with 25...Qxa3.
25.Qc5+
Now White is winning material by force.
25...Qxc5

26.Qxc4! bxc4 27.Qe5+
27.Qe5+ Qc7 28.Qxc6 and Black only has a rook for the queen. 1-0

Alexandra Kosteniuk (2531) -
Adriana Nikolova (2325)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.39), 14.08.2014

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qf6
5.Qc3 d6 6.g5 a6 7.Qd2 Qxd4 8.Qxd4
Qa5 9.h4 h6 10.Qd2 Qc7 11.Qc4 e6
12.b3 Qd7 13.0-0-0 Qc6 14.Qe4 c5
15.Qd3 b5 16.f4 Qd7 17.Qd5 Qxd5
18.Qxd5 Qc8 19.Qf1 Qe7 20.g4 Qxg4
21...xf4 22...f8 g5 23.hxg5hxg5 24...b1 xf4 25...xf4 e5 26...d2 e7 27...h1 g8 28...xh6 xg4

12...xc3 bx3 13.0-0 dbd7 14...xc6 wb6 15...e5 wb7 16.a5 wc7 17...a4 x6 18.a6 xc6 19...xc6 0-0 20...xc7 xc7 21...xd7 xd7 22.bc3 ed8 23.fcl e5 24.e4 fab8 25...xc3 xa5 26...cc1 x4 27...xb4 xb4 28...c7 exd4 29...x8 dx3 30...xd7 xd7 31.a7 exf2+ 32...xf2 x8 33...a7 g6 34...e3 b6 35...d5 f6 36.g4 h6 37...e4 g7 38.h4 f1 39...b7

29...xf7+! xg7 30...xh6 31...h6
White is only a pawn up, but Black’s troubled king makes the material balance almost irrelevant.
31...xf7 32...g1 ec4 33...h8+ xd7 34...g7+ e6 35...h6+ xe5 36...g5+ xd4 37.c3+ xd3 38...h3+ xe4 39...h4+ xd3 40.g3+ xd2 41...h2+ ec2

42...g2 and Black resigned. 1-0

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (2743) -
Hikaru Nakamura (2787)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.5), 14.08.2014

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3...c3 dxc4 4.e3 b5 5.a4
b4 6...c4 wd5 7...d2 c3 8...f3 wa5 9...e5 xf6 10...gf3 e6 11...d3 wa6

41...e2+ and Black resigned as the upcoming pawn ending is still lost for him:
41...e2+ 42.xd4 xd2+ 43.xe5 xe2+ 44.xd6 x5 45.xf7+ xf7 46.xf7 x5
47.¢d7 ¢f8 48.¢e6 ¢g7 49.¢e7 ¢g8
50.¢f6 ¢f8 51.¢xg6 ¢g8 52.¢h6 ¢h8
53.g6 ¢g8 54.g7 ¢f7 55.¢h7 and the g-pawn queens. 1-0

Liren Ding (2742) -
Grzegorz Gajewski (2659)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.26), 14.08.2014

1.d4 ¢f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ¥b4+ 4.¥d2 ¥e7
5.¥g2 d5 6.¢f3 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8.¥c2 ²bd7
9.¢d1 b6 10.b3 a5 11.¢c3 ¥a6 12.¢bd2
b5 13.e4 bxc4 14.¢xe4 ¥xe4 15.¢xe4
dxe4 16.¢e5 f5 17.¢xc6 ¥e8 18.¢xa5
¢f6 19.d5 õb7 20.¢xe7+ ¥xe7 21.¢c3
exd5 22.¢ab1 ¥f7 23.¢xf6 ¥xf6 24.cxd5
¢d8 25.d6 a6 26.¢c6 ¢d3

27.¢xd3!
27.¢b6 õfd7 and Black will save the game
by liquidating the passed d-pawn.

27...exd3 28.¢d5 ¥f8 29.¢xf7 ¥xf7
30.¢d1 ¥xa2 31.¢b7 ¥a8 32.¢d7 d2
33.¢xd2 ¥a1+ 34.¢g2 ¥f6

At this point it looked as though White
might be facing some technical problems,
but Ding wraps things up in convincing
fashion.

35.¢e2 f4 36.¢e5+ ¥f7 37.¢h5+ ³g6
38.¢d5+ ¥f8

39.¢e5 fxe3 40.hxg3
40.hxg3 h6 41.¢c5+ ³g8 42.¢c8 ³f6
43.¢e8+ and White wins the house. 1-0

Jan–Krzysztof Duda (2576) -
Yangyi Yu (2668)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.27), 14.08.2014

1.e4 c5 2.¢f3 d6 3.d4 exd4 4.¢xd4 ³f6
5.¢c3 a6 6.¢e2 e5 7.¢b3 ³e7 8.¢g5 ³e6
9.¢xf6 xf6 10.¢d3 0-0 11.0-0 ³c7
12.¢b1 ³d7 13.¢d5 õxd5 14.¢xd5 b5
15.¢b7 ¢f6 16.f3 ³e8 17.c4 ¥f8 18.¢c6
¢b8 19.¢a5 ¥a7 20.c5 dxc5 21.¢b7 c4
22.¢xa7 ¥xa7 23.¢c1 ¥c7 24.¢b3 ³d7
25.¢a1 ³d2 26.¢b2 ³ed8 27.b3 c3 28.a4
bxª a4 29.¢xa6 a3 30.¢b5 h5 31.h4 g6
32.¢e1 ¢b4 33.¢e1 ³g7 34.¢a2 ³g8
35.¢xd2 õxd2+ 36.¢e2 ¥e7 37.¢xd2
cxd2 38.¢e2 ³c6 39.¢e2 õd4 40.¢xd4
cxd4 41.f4 d3 42.¢f3 ³f6 43.g4 hxg4
44.¢xg4 ¥e7 45.e5 ²d8
46.f5
46.h5 gxh5 47.gfxh5 d7 48.f5 c6 49.g4 d5 50.e6 fxe6 51.fxe6 e4 and Black simply runs his king to e1.
46...gxf5 47.d1 e7 48.h5 f8 49.f3 g7 50.d1 h6 51.f3 g5 52.d1 f4 53.b1 f5 54.f3 xe5 55.a2 f8 56.h6 f6 57.h5 b4 58.b1

58...f3
58...f3 59.xf3 g6 60.d1 xh6 and Black wins easily by using his king to escort the f–pawn. 0-1
Blunders, upsets and brilliances

*By GM Einar Gausel*

Elshan Moradiabadi (2598) - Patrick Aizpurua (2172)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.39), 14.08.2014

28...£g6!
28...axb6 29.¦a8+ ¢h7 30.£xf2 and Black has little to show for the missing bishop.
29.e4
29.bxc7 £c2#
29...£xg5+ 30.£e2 £g4+ 31.£d2 £f4+ 32.£e2 £g4+
White has no sensible way of avoiding perpetual check. ½-½

Amalia Aranaz Murillo (2314) - Maria Kursova (2313)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.12), 14.08.2014

22...¦ad8
Black is still winning, but she missed a beautiful finish: 22...¤g3+ 23.¢g1 £g2+! 24.¦xg2 ¤h3#
23.¥f1 ◊g3+ 24.◊g1 ◊xf1 25.£xf1 £e6
26.£f2 £g6+ 27.◊h1

27...£g2!
27...£g2 28.£xg2 £xd1+! 29.£g1 (29.£xd1 £xg2#) 29...£xf3+ 30.£g2 £xg2# 0-1
Tatjana Melamed (2364) - Lela Javakhishvili (2478)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.14), 14.08.2014

19.£h5?
19...g6 20.£g5 ¥f5! 21.¥xf5 ¥xe5
22.¦ab1

19...£h5
19...£c3 ¥xe2 20.¥xa5 ¥xe1+ 21.¥xe1 ¥d7 leave the position fairly balanced.
19...g6 20.£g5 £f5! 21.¥xf5 ¥xe5 22.£ab1

22...£f4!
22...£f4 23.¥xe8+ ¥xe8 24.¥xf4 ¥e1+
25.¥xe1 ¥xe1# 0-1

Ellen Hagesæther (2182) - Kristina Bacic (1801)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.36), 14.08.2014

22...£f5?? 23.¥xf5! g6
23...exf5 24.¥xe8#
24.¥f6+ ¥g8 25.¥g3 ¥f8 26.¥d8 and Black resigned. 1-0

Francisco Vallejo Pons (2698) - Le Quang Liem (2710)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.40), 14.08.2014

34.£e7!
This leaves Black unable to relieve the pressure through exchanges.
34...£e6 35.f7+ ¥g7 36.£e8+ ¥h6 37.¥xd8 £xe7
38.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d6}}}!}}
38.\texttt{d6} \texttt{g7} 39.\texttt{g8}+ \texttt{h6} 40.\texttt{e8} and the f-pawn decides the game. 1-0

Hansen Eric (2593) -
Gomez John Paul (2526)
WCO2014 Tromso (11.47), 14.08.2014

According to the endgame tablebases this position is a win for White in 92 moves. This means that Black could probably claim a draw after 50 moves with reasonable defense. Since Canada didn't have much to play for, Hansen decided to call it a day.
82.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{xh4}}} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}}}