

XVIII Voronezh International Chess Festival was held from June 10 till June 21. It gathered more than 300 players from 10 different countries and almost all regions of Russia. The festival program has not changed since 2012. It includes six tournaments: Master Open (classical chess, Russia Cup stage), FIDE Open (rating tournament, Elo < 2200), Chess960, Rapid and Blitz one-day tournaments and a tournament for people with disabilities “Sail of Hope”.

Firstly, a few words about the main event of the Festival – Master Open. 120 players from 8 countries took part in it, 25 of them are GMs and more than half of players have international titles. Out of 20 foreign players 14 have titles as well.

GM Pavel Ponkratov (RUS, Ekaterinburg, 2595) obtained his first Elo rating in Voronezh in 2000. After that he came to Voronezh several times to participate in the Chess Festival. 2010 became successful for him – he won both rapid and blitz tournaments without tie-breaks. Yet he never fought for the main title in classical chess in Voronezh before. This year Pavel was one of the leaders for a while but after he lost to GM Alexei Fedorov in the 7th round it seemed that there was no chance for him to win the main prize. Nevertheless, in the last round Pavel managed to defeat his opponent Alexander Rakhmanov, who was the only player to win Master Open twice. You can see the last round games defining the leaders in the right picture:



GM Alexei Fedorov (BLR, Mogilyov, 2574) already competed in Voronezh several times too. In 2007 he won the rapid tournament here and in 2008 – the Master Open’s third prize. This time he was even closer to winning the main prize: being 6 points ahead after 7 rounds, he was the sole leader of the tournament, but in the end two draws against Artemiev and Khalifman left him second.



For the ex-FIDE world champion GM Alexander Khalifman (RUS, Saint-Petersburg, 2617) it was the first visit to Voronezh. Participation of such famous player in the event attracted lots of chess amateurs to the tournament hall. Voronezh region governor Alexey Gordeev had a meeting with festival organizers and honorary guests including Khalifman (on the right photo below). Later in the first round Alexander lost a very impressive game to FM Konstantin

Kostin (it might have been "the best game of his life" for Kostin). After such losses favorites do not usually fight for the first place, but not in Khalifman's case: 6 wins and only 2 draws with Alexander Predke and Alexei Fedorov (who were very successful in this tournament as well) followed. But the first round results spoiled Khalifman's performance and he ended up being the third.



Vladislav Artemiev (RUS, Omsk, 2647) has the highest rating in the world among players Under 16. He already visited Voronezh Festival in 2010 when he was 12 years old. Vladislav is characterized by referees as a very polite and intelligent young man. He was expected to fight for the first prize and he did not lose a single game but eventually was half point behind the leaders. Alexander Predke (RUS, Togliatti, 2491) is not an IM yet, but his level is evidently much higher than a standard IM's one. Out of 7 games Alexander played against GMs he won two and drew five times.



Photo: 2nd round, GM Vladislav Artemiev (right) and FM Kirill Alekseenko; Alexander Predke

GM Dmitry Kokarev (RUS, Penza, 2628) was the Master Open tournament winner in 2011. He also performed well at other Russia cup stages in the last few years. Mikhail Brodsky (UKR, Kharkiv, 2556) is better known as a chess coach than a chess player now. He is a captain of Ukrainian women chess team that won World and European Championships. But Mikhail showed in Voronezh that he is still a great player himself.



There are a lot of different Master Open prizes for different categories of players, some of them quite special (e.g., prizes for foreign players). You can see the winners of these prizes in the pictures below. Foreign players: GM Batchuluun Tsegmed (Mongolia), GM Manuel Leon Hoyos (Mexico) – both players are their Olympic national teams leaders, GM Alexander Nosenko and IM Sergey Pavlov (both from Ukraine). Local players: IM Sergey Sergienko (who played in Master Open in the evenings and worked as a referee in FIDE Open in the mornings), Roman Klimentov (whose son Eugeny won the FIDE Open tournament) and IM Alexsey Peskov (Kantemirovka).



Women: WIM Victoria Tarasova, WIM Maria Severina, IM Munguntuul Batkhuyag (Mongolia) and WFM Polina Shuvalova. Juniors: FM Kirill Alekseenko and Arsen Kukhmazov.



And now let's say a few words about other festival tournaments. IM Mikhail Demidov (RUS, Moscow) who had 6 points after 7 games played, was the first in Chess960 tournament; GM Dmitry Bocharov (RUS, Novosibirsk) was the second. IM Ivan Rozum (RUS, Vologda) took the third place in Chess960 as well as won the Rapid tournament with 8 points in 9 games; several players had tie-break with 7 points, Dmitry Bocharov became the second again, GM Andrey Deviatkin (RUS, Moscow) gained the third prize. Ivan Rozum (left), 3 rapid tournament priziers (right).



After ending up second twice, Bocharov swept out the Blitz tournament (10.5 points in 11 games!), GM Artem Timofeev (RUS, Kazan) was the second with 9 points, Mikhail Demidov became the third in the tie-break with 8 points. You can see 3 of the Blitz tournament winners in the left picture and Voronezh IM Sergei Chekhov in the right one.

Sergey missed Master Open because he participated in Russian High League in Vladivostok but he came back to Voronezh to become the second among local players in Blitz tournament.



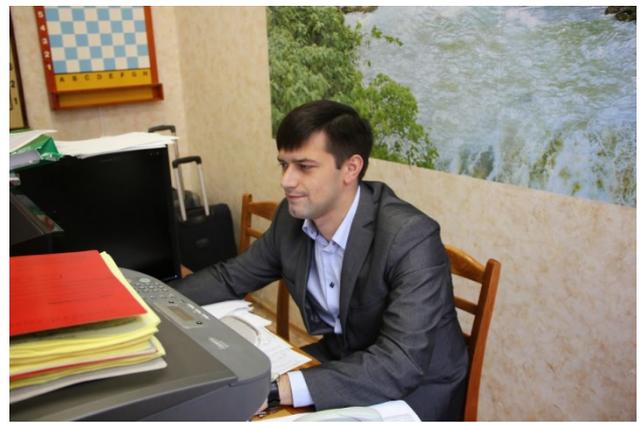
“Sail of hope” tournament gathered 22 players from 9 regions of Russia. Evgeny Suslov (Ivanovo) won this tournament second time in row. Here are two pictures from the tournament closing ceremony.



Usually there are many local players, seniors, juniors and women in FIDE Open tournament, same thing happened this year: 114 players from more than 30 regions of Russia came to compete in Voronezh. Leaders changed several times, 14-year old Evgeny Klimentov (Voronezh, playing white, right picture) took the first place after a victory in the last round with 7.5 points in 9 games. 16-year old Roman Alkaev (Penza) who had the same result was the second. Vladimir Napalkov (Vologda, in the left picture) is known as a great correspondence chess player (ICCF GM) but he proved himself to be good at the board games and took the third place with 7 points on tie-break.



Of course, festival would be impossible without its organisers. GM (as well as IA and IO) Alexander Raetsky has been the team leader of festival organisers for 18 years. IM Anton Kuzin (Moscow) was his deputy in the Master Open this year. The festival secretary Sergey Fomin who made all the computer pairings, also played a key role in the festival bulletin creation.



FM Sergey Surov, one of the best Voronezh region chess tournaments organisers (in the town of Borisoglebsk), worked here as a Master Open referee. WGM Irina Semenova also preferred a role of a referee and only played in Rapid tournament. FM Sergey Surov, one of the best Voronezh region chess tournaments organisers (in the town of Borisoglebsk), worked here as a Master Open referee. WGM Irina Semenova also preferred a role of a referee and only played in Rapid tournament.



IM Maxim Chetverik, as usually, was the tournament applications manager and one of his tasks was to provide a festival history report. IM Sergey Bystrov (Sanct-Peterburg) was not only a tournament referee, but also the festival games supporter. He was broadcasting them on the Internet and created festival photo albums on his website.



IM Valery Lisik provided Master Open games text commentary on the festival website. Andrey Zhileykin not only played in Master Open but also translated some of the festival materials into English.



And now back to the players again. GM Igor Glek didn't participate in Master Open this year, but he took part in Chess960 and Rapid tournaments. GM Dmitry Kryakvin not only played in festival tournaments and patronized several juniors, but also put some information about the festival on the Russian Chess Federation website.



IM David Paravyan and GM Adam Tukhaev played some impressive games.



Young Australian FM Anton Smirnov was not particularly successful in Voronezh, but he earned a lot of fans here. Swiss chess player Thierry Bonferroni learned more about Russia, and so did Mexican GM Manuel Leon Hoyos, who knows several Russian phrases now.



There were a lot of young talented players, Russian youth champions in different age categories, World Young Stars tournaments participants. Andrey Esipenko is the best U-12 player in the world. Illya Grigorjev won all the games on the first board in Russian School Team final "White rook", but obviously Master Open tournament is of a different level.



After games. IM Yaroslav Prizant and GM Dmitry Kryakvin, GM Mikhail Mozharov and IM Ivan Rozum.



IM Vitaly Sivuk and GM Adam Tukhaev, IM Yaroslav Ulko and GM Andrey Deviatkin.



Young players' parents.



"How interesting!" Andrey Esipenko, Razmik Ginosyan and Mikhail Demidov.



Goodbye Voronezh, see you next year!

