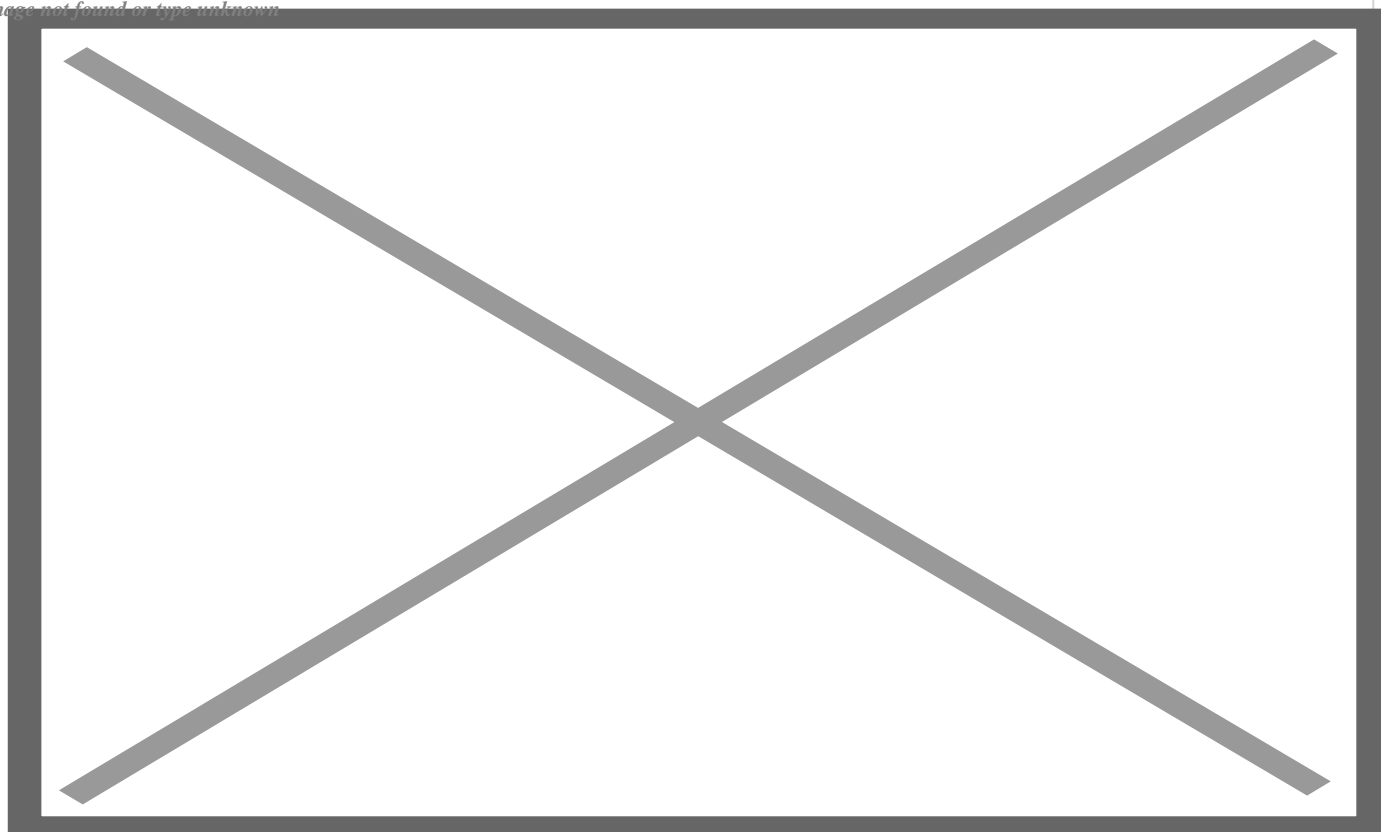


Russian Nepomniachtchi defends top spot in Candidates Chess Tournament

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Ian Nepomniachtchi

Madrid, June 22 (PL) -Russian chess player Ian Nepomniachtchi defends on Wednesday in Madrid the lead in the Candidates Tournament for the world title, when he faces American Hikaru Nakamura.

Nepomniachtchi remained alone at the top of the standings after winning the day before in 39 moves against the French-Iranian Alireza Firouzja.

This Wednesday, in the fifth round, he will try to take one more step to return to dispute the world chess crown with the champion, the Norwegian Magnus Carlsen.

Behind Nepo, who leads with three points, are the American Fabiano Caruana (2.5), the Polish Jan-Krzysztof Duda, the Hungarian Richard Rapport and Nakamura (2), and closing the table, with 1.5 points, the trio formed by the Chinese Ding Liren, the Azerbaijani Teimour Radjábov and Firouzja.

The other pairings today are Caruana-Rapport, Radjábov-Ding and Firouzja-Duda.

This tournament is being held at the Santoña Palace in Madrid and will conclude on July 4, or one day later if it is necessary to play tiebreaker games.

The winner will play for the world title against Carlsen next year, unless the Nordic does not want to defend his crown, and then it would be decided by the two leaders of this match.

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