

Russian Karjakin to Compete in Chess World Championship Title Match

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Grandmaster Sergei Karjakin

Grandmaster Sergei Karjakin will become the first Russian since 2008 to compete in a title match of the World Chess Federation (FIDE) championship, after he defeated Fabiano Caruana of the United States in Moscow on Monday, according to an announcement on the FIDE website.

Karjakin, playing the white pieces, won the final round of the FIDE World Candidates Tournament, after sacrificing a rook for a strong attack, FIDE said. Karjakin, 26, will now challenge reigning world champion Magnus Carlsen, 25, this November in New York.

“In the most dramatic finish of the event, Sergei Karjakin and Fabiano Caruana entered the final round with equal points and paired one against another,” the statement said. “There was one more variable at play, owing to the tie-break rules, and [former champion Viswanathan]

Anand's result was also important for the two leaders.”

India's Anand faced Russia's Peter Svidler in the final round on Monday. Following a series of massive exchanges, the game ended in a draw, FIDE said.

Karjakin said the first thing he heard after emerging from the room were rounds of viewers' applause, the TASS news agency reported.

“I will remember them my whole life,” he was quoted as saying. “This victory is my greatest accomplishment in life so far. Now I'm going to New York. Not yet thinking about the game with Carlsen. For now I want to celebrate the victory.”

Russia's chess and sports officials praised the victory and the upcoming title match as issues of national importance.

“Karjakin must now solve the main task for the country,” the head of Russia's chess federation, Andrei Filatov, was quoted by TASS as saying. “Now he must defeat Carlsen. We are expecting this from him. We are going for the crown.”

Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said Karjakin's victory in the candidates tournament “will give a powerful impetus to the development of the sport of chess in our country,” TASS reported. “Now we wholeheartedly wish him success in New York,” Mutko said.

The Soviet Union and later Russia held the FIDE world championship title nearly without interruption since the championships began in 1948 and until the 1990s. But Russians have not held the title in recent years.

The last time a Russian grandmaster played at the world championship was in 2008, when former champion Vladimir Kramnik challenged Anand to regain his title, but lost.

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