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Billed as the highest-stakes open chess tournament ever held, the Millionaire Chess Open, recently completed in Las Vegas, NV, was bound to fetch at least some attention; it's not often, after all, that Class players are able to compete for the type of huge prizes normally reserved for the elite grandmasters; in my section for example, the U1800's, the top prize was \$40,000. The biggest prizes, of course, were in the Open Section, with first-place eventually won by GM Wesley So, on so-called *Millionaire Monday*, when those who qualified, by virtue of their performance in the first seven rounds, played for the top prizes.

Nonetheless, although the prize-fund was one of the main attractions of the tournament, it almost goes without saying that the venue itself - Las Vegas - helped to lend the tournament some added excitement; hosted in the Planet Hollywood resort, there is little that one lacks in the way of entertainment or, for that matter, almost anything else; and the great Las Vegas weather was another added bonus. With plenty else to see and do, besides being able to watch the games of the top GM's there was little chance of getting bored between rounds!

I wasn't the only MCC player to participate in the tournament though, and I was pleased to have the company of Calvin Hori throughout, himself competing in the U2000 section; having a friend to share the *Millionaire Chess experience* with - both the joy of victory and the misery of defeat - and along with finding some great restaurants together, certainly made a positive difference for me. We did spot a couple of other Massachusetts players at the event, but, those aside, the tournament drew participants from far and wide, with 560 players from 40 different countries.

Touting strong anti-sandbagging (one's highest rating over the previous nine months determined one's section) and anti-cheating measures, security at the event was like no other I've seen, with no player able to enter the playing area without being screened and sometimes patted-down for electronic devices (all of which were prohibited), and with nobody allowed to re-enter the playing area after their game had completed without having their hand ink-stamped; metal detectors and security were even present at the restrooms!

The media also had quite a presence at the tournament, and, courtesy of Calvin happening to mention to two BBC journalists that I'm a Brit', I somehow managed to get interviewed by the BBC television crew which was there; thankfully that was short and sweet, and to my knowledge the footage never got past the cutting-room floor. Nonetheless, it was interesting to see the attention being given to the event by the media around the world; newspapers, various websites, and television alike provided comprehensive coverage.

For me, Round 1 (of seven rounds), which started on the Thursday evening, began with a draw. As every other chess player knows, losing the first round of any tournament is never too much fun and so it was at least better than losing; it was quite a good game, and I was reasonably content with the fact that I was still in with a shot at the big bucks, should I manage to do well for the rest of the tournament. And so it was I went to bed that night still dreaming of the next six rounds and the crushing defeats I might inflict!

However, without laboring over the details of the next six rounds, it didn't quite work out the way I dreamed it might do, but it wasn't altogether bad; I ended the tournament with three wins; two draws and two losses, to earn four points from a possible seven, which was enough to earn a \$600 check. Only one of the games I think I'd prefer to forget altogether, (as Black against an English Opening), for a short while at least, but hopefully I can learn something from each of the games, even the ones that I won.

Having planned to be at the tournament for *Millionaire Monday*, but finding myself not participating in the final qualifiers, I'd decided that I might come back a day early. However, upon discovering the airline wanted to charge me as much to change my flight as the entire cost of the original round-trip flight, I decided to stay! I'm glad I did. The final day was really interesting; one could wander around and watch all of the top players playing, and a screening room with some excellent live commentary of the several top games was superb. I was also at the presentation ceremony of the \$100,000 ceremonial check to Wesley So, which was exciting.

Even though my prize ended up being \$39,400 short of the goal, I'm still very pleased that I went; and it was fun to see and meet so many fantastic chess players (and to share the elevator

with Susan Polgar! - Wesley So's coach), and to also have the chance to play against a completely different group of players to those I would normally meet. From start to finish the tournament was very well organized, and I can highly recommend the experience to anyone.

In fact, so we have learned in the past couple of days, it seems that *Millionaire Chess* will shortly be announcing a new tournament for next year, 2015; at the moment it's unclear whether this will still be in Las Vegas or not, but no doubt the official website at [millionairechess.com](http://millionairechess.com) will be forthcoming with details soon.

With that in mind, maybe I'll put my \$600 winnings on the side and use it for my entry fee next year: hope to see you there!