

Anand to face Ivanchuk in Leon chess final

World No.2 Vassily Ivanchuk will face world champion Viswanathan Anand of India in the final of the XXI Magistral Ciudad de Leon rapid chess.

In the second semi-final Saturday, Ivanchuk beat Alexei Shirov, a Latvia-born Spaniard, 3-1. Ivanchuk won the first two games, once with white and then with black in two different variations of the Sicilian defence and sealed the match. The third and fourth games were drawn.

In the final to be played late Sunday, Anand will start as the favourite in his adopted home, Spain. Anand has won the Leon title eight times in the past, including for the last three years.

After Ivanchuk opened the score with white in a Sicilian Rossolimo game lasting 45 moves, the Ukrainian hit the target with black in a Sicilian Najdorf game lasting 33 moves.

Shirov came close to narrowing the game in the third game, where he played the Ruy Lopez Moeller Defence but Ivanchuk hung in for a draw as Shirov overlooked a winning line. In the fourth game Ivanchuk played safe for a draw in 29 moves.

In the first semi-final Anand beat Francisco Vallejo Pons of Spain 3.5-2.5 in the tie-breaker.

This rapid chess event is taking place in the Edificio de la Junta de Castilla y Leon, in the Spanish town of Leon. There were four players to start with and now Anand and Ivanchuk are left to play for the title.

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