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# In Event Full of Mishaps, No. 4 Seed Does Himself In

By **DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN**

The [European Individual Chess Championship](#) has become one of the strongest tournaments in the world, partly because the top finishers earn spots to the World Cup. But this year's event, which ended Saturday and had more than 175 grandmasters in competition, seemed to have been jinxed.

In Round 6, seven players forfeited because of the switch to daylight saving time in Bulgaria, where the tournament was held. The players forgot the mnemonic "spring forward, fall back," so instead of advancing their clocks an hour last Saturday night, they moved them back an hour and showed up two hours late on Sunday.

Then in Round 8, [Shakhriyar Mamedyarov](#) of Azerbaijan, the No. 2 seed, forfeited because he was late by a few seconds. That violated the zero-tolerance rule that requires players to be at the board when a round begins. The rule was created because some players used to routinely show up anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes late, and they were not forced to forfeit unless they were at least an hour late. (It was eventually decided that such behavior was disrespectful.)

In terms of the actual competition last week, the biggest oddity was the performance of the [Dutch player Anish Giri](#). He is only 17 but is regarded as one the top up-and-coming players, having risen to No. 27 in the world.

He was the No. 4 seed in Bulgaria, but he had a terrible start, losing three games early, which will knock him out of the top 40, and perhaps even the top 50, in the next rankings.

Doubtless he will rebound, but his play was certainly far below his standards, as was shown in his Round 2 loss to [Illya Nyzhnyk](#) of Ukraine, who, at 15, is another budding star.

Giri chose the solid Semi-Slav Defense. He ceded the center by grabbing a pawn with 5 ... dc4, and that would have been fine if he had followed up correctly.

Instead of 7 ... a6, 7 ... Nd5 would have been preferable after 8 a4 f6 9 Nf3 b4. And 9 ... Be7 allowed Nyzhnyk to regain his pawn. Giri could have played 9 ... Nd5, and he would have been fine after 10 e4 Nc3 11 bc3 Nd7.

But he then made a strange decision to exchange his second bishop for Nyzhnyk's knight, which left him in a precarious spot.

But he still had a tenable position until he played 21 ... f5; 21 ... g6 would have been better. He followed that by blundering with 22 ... Rf6, when 22 ... Nf6 was essential.

Nyzhnyk struck immediately with 23 Bd5 and quickly picked Giri apart. Giri resigned after 29 Qg7 because he could not play 29 ... Qg7; Nyzhnyk would have queened his pawn after 30 hg7 Kg7 31 e7.