

Pamplona says goodbye to its non-fiestas of San Fermín with a 'Chess Encierro'

The 'bulls', turned into chess masters

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USPA NEWS - For the second consecutive year, on July 14 - the date on which the San Fermín festivities traditionally end - Pamplona sang the 'Pobre de mí', the song with which the people of Pamplona mourn the end of the festivities and are placed for those of the following year, with regret for not having been able to celebrate them due to the Coronavirus pandemic. But this year, Pamplona said goodbye to its Sanfermines with a special event: celebrating this July 14 a particular 'Chess Encierro' in which 80 games were played simultaneously between the corrals on the Santo Domingo slope and the center of the Plaza de Toros.

It is the route of the Encierro of the Bulls. The place of the bulls was occupied by six high-level national and international chess players and the runners were represented by 80 players located at as many tables distributed throughout the 848 meters of the race. To give this peculiar Encierro more realism, many players came dressed, in the upper part, with white clothes and a red scarf, and the 'bulls', dressed in horns. At the start of the race, at 11:30 am, the delegate councilor for Culture and Equality, María García-Barberena, was present.

The activity was an initiative of the Pamplona City Council, Sanferfood and the Chess 24 platform. It had the collaboration of Casa Misericordia, which gave the Plaza de Toros and suspended the guided tours that take place daily this summer, with which visitors from the city are getting to know the bullring and details of the Encierro.

Participants between 7 and 62 years old

The six great chess players were Pepe Cuenca, Rey Enigma, El Divis and Alexandra Prado, and local players Daniel Zamarbide and Eihartze Buiza. The three great masters were placed in the most complicated areas of the Encierro: in Plaza Consistorial until Mercaderes curve, Rey Enigma was located; Pepe Cuenca played in the second section of Estafeta, and El Divis in the alley and the Plaza de Toros.

Each chess master had an average of 13 tables through which he was moving pieces. According to the mechanics of the competition, at each table he made a play, except for the last one he had assigned, in which he moved twice before going the other way. The time it took for the 'bull' to arrive is the time each player had to plan their next move. The tables were placed with 10.5 meters of interval between them, maintaining the health safety distance. Within 15 minutes of starting the games, the tables placed on the Santo Domingo slope and on the Labrit section had been repositioned to allow vehicle traffic.

This confinement was for all ages, since they were running with their chips from a 7-year-old girl to a 62-year-old person. Half of those who had signed up were under 18 years of age, and there were 70 men and 10 women. The 80 places were awarded in order of registration.

In this way, the San Fermín Mundial Grand International Chess Tournament "La Fiesta Inteligente" was brought to an end, a tournament in which the Norwegian Magnus Carlsen, first classified in the world ranking, won. The championship began on May 19 through the Chess24 platform. 500 chess players from around the world have played more than 8,000 games. The winners of the four qualifying tournaments played in the quarterfinals against Grandmasters Magnus Carlsen, from Norway (first in the world ranking); Ding Liren, from China (third); Levon Aronian, from Armenia (fifth) and Wesley So, from the United States (ninth).

Thanks to this initiative, millions of people from more than 60 countries are getting to know Pamplona, its culture and its gastronomy, in the broadcasts of the games, in the online spaces and in the promotional videos that have been broadcast during the tournament. And it is that the commentators Pepe Cuenca and El Divis, in addition to following the games, have toured the city to show the world its heritage, traditions and gastronomy.

In the absence of definitive data, the number of impacts it has generated on the different platforms and media has exceeded 15 million, and the scope is expected to continue increasing during the month of July thanks to the amount of material recorded in recent weeks.

Thus, the tournament has become a first-rate advertising showcase for promoting the city in a year in which the San Fermín festivities had to be suspended due to the health crisis.

Six chess greats in the Encierro

Pepe Cuenca, one of the star commentators on the Chess24 platform, achieved the title of International Master at the age of 19 and in 2015 that of International Grand Master. Before that, in Andalusia he won a large number of championships. He has participated in different European leagues: Spanish, German, French, Italian, English, Swedish, Danish and Portuguese.

Rey Enigma is a Madrid chess player whose identity is unknown and who develops his professional work in the field of marketing and advertising. He started playing chess at age 5 and has competed in international tournaments. He has made himself known primarily through social media and has more than 223,000 followers on TikTok, 23,000 on YouTube, 5,000 on Twitch, and 18,000 on Instagram.

David Martínez, known as El Divis, is the director of Chess24 on the Spanish channel, a space in which, together with Pepe Cuenca, he has revolutionized the way of broadcasting chess by giving it a more casual and fun air. He is the coach of the Spanish women's team.

The 29-year-old Daniel Zamarbide Iñarrea from Pamplona, has been 10 times champion of Navarra by age, five times absolute champion of Navarra, a gold medal in a Spanish under-10 championship and a silver medal in the Spanish under-12 championship. In addition, he has been part of the Spanish representation in Europeans and World Cups, and was a teacher at the Oberena chess school.

Alexandra Naira Prado Serrano, Woman Candidate Master, has been several times national female youth champion in Bolivia. She has twice represented her country at the chess Olympics and various South American and world championships. She works as a producer for Chess24. Finally, the Biscayan Eihartze Buiza Prieto has been runner-up of Spain under 18 and champion of Spain under 16. A Biscayan based in Pamplona, she is a monitor for the Navarra Chess Federation.

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