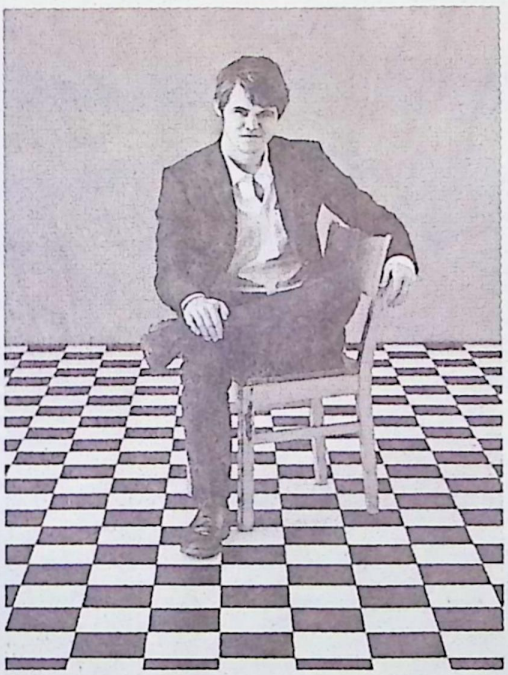
then Carlsen has turned into a rock star of chess. With his smouldering good looks and six-pack abs he has been featured in ad campaigns alongside the likes of Liv Tyler, and turned down a small role in the most recent Star Trek movie. He models for the clothing company G-Star Raw and has appeared on "Charlie Rose," "The Colbert Report" and "60 minutes" which has called him the 'Mozart of Chess." Even in Anand's backyard, Carlsen was a celebrity. When he went to Chennai in August to check out the location of the match, he was greeted by hundreds of screaming young women in a mall. His Elo rating, 2872, is the highest ever recorded, as opposed to Anand's 2817. Elo rating system is a complex formula to measure chess skills and only six players in history have topped 2800.

Viswanathan Anand, on the other hand, is the 43-year-old titleholder since 2007 who first won the title in 2000. He is responsible for the revival of the game in his native India that claims to have invented the sport. Millions of Indian kids forced by their parents to take chess lessons have Anand to blame.



Magnus Carlsen, a rock star of Chess.

In a game against Vladimir Kramnik, title holder from 2006-2007, Carlsen once recovered from a situation that Kasparov called "impossible" to force a draw. Carlsen is largely self-taught, and can play various styles of chess. He has been a full-time chess player since he was fifteen, and spends more than a hundred and sixty days a year on the road. When he is not travelling, he lives in a house with his family in an affluent suburb of Oslo. He left school two years ago without formally graduating. Though he had shown unusual mathematical aptitude as a little boy, he was more engaged by soccer and skiing. When Magnus was eight, his father made an attempt to engage him in chess and, he found it "just a richer and more complicated game than any other." He has a prodigious memory for board positions and moves. He has studied with Simen Agdestein, a top Norwegian grandmaster at the time, and later with Kasparov.

After the match against Anand, Carlsen said he realized he had a chance to grab the title from Anand during Game 3 on November 12. Anand had built up a considerable advantage, but Carlsen fought his way back, and the game ended in a draw.

"What I realized during the game was that he was also nervous and vulnerable," Carlsen said in a press conference after he won the title. "He was no Superman."

Anand played well throughout, but he could not match Carlsen, whose specialty is to relentlessly pressure opponents and create problems for them. Kenneth Rogoff, a former grandmaster and Professor of Economics at Harvard writes in a blog, "Magnus plays at a level of tactical brilliance and sublime endgame technique that I could not even have imagined, even from people like Petrosian, Tal and Larsen whom I played in the 1976 Interzonal in Biel. " In 2012 Rogoff drew a blitz game (15 minutes or less per side) with Carlsen who does not like drawn games and tries to avoid giving his opponents that opportunity. Even in the last game of the match, when he needed only a draw to clinch the championship, he pressed on until, after five hours and 65 moves, there were only kings left on the board. "Carlsen's mastery lies in his endgame. He starts casually, plays competitively in the middle, but brings out his secret weapons in the end game, completely taking his opponents by surprise," says Enamul Hossain Razib, one of the five grandmasters (GM) of Bangladesh.

There is hope in the chess world that with Carlsen as the game's official standard-bearer, it will regain the cachet it briefly enjoyed when Bobby Fischer, the eccentric American, defeated Boris Spassky, a Russian, to claim the world championship title in the international sensation known as the Match of the Century in 1972. Chess enthusiasts say the game needs another big personality to energize the cerebral game, played by around 600 million people worldwide. And they are pinning their hopes on Carlsen.

Carlsen seems to be aware of that pressure. "I really hope that this can have some positive effect for chess, both in Norway and worldwide," Carlsen said after clinching the title. "The match was shown on television, and I know a lot of people who don't play chess found it very interesting to follow. And that's absolutely wonderful." ■