

Martinique c'est magnifique

Sun, sand, coconut trees, crystal clear turquoise waters, fruity drinks and epic cocktails are just some of the things that come to mind when imagining that postcard-perfect-laid-back beach bliss. Ahhh, the Caribbean and its tropical light which seems to promise blue morning after blue morning forever after...



Waking up in Paradise, in the French West Indies

The 6th edition of Martinique's International Open, held in Fort-de-France between 09-13.04.2017, made your Romanian author by birth become Caribbean by conviction. I am still trying to understand quite what that means though.



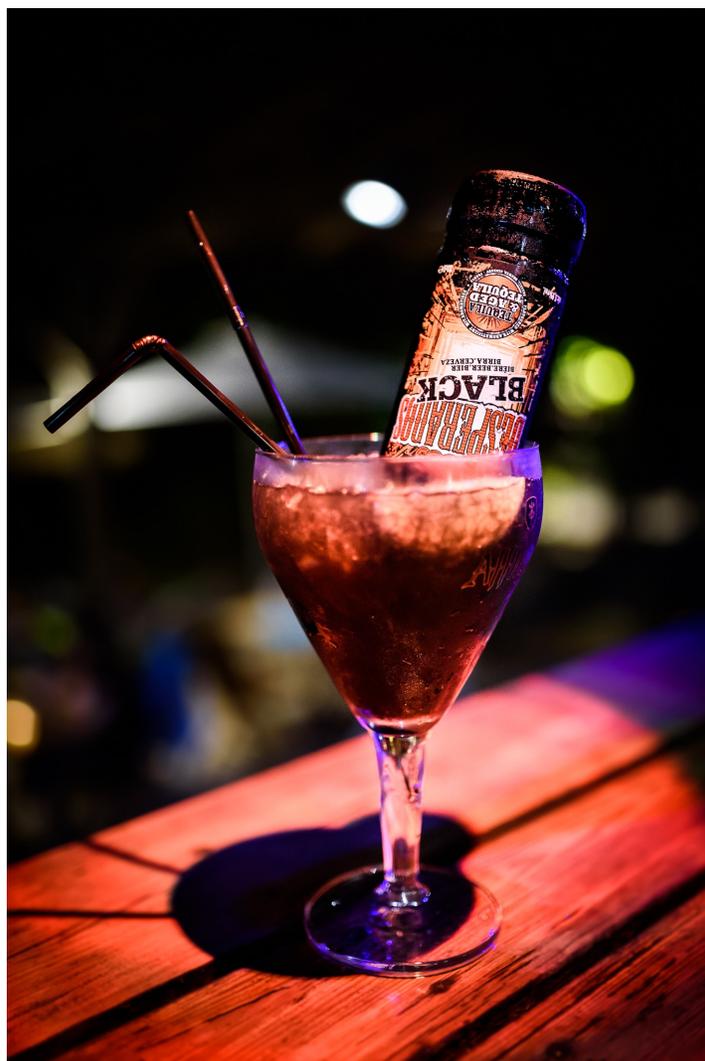
Blending in



Focusing on chess with such premises – now that's a challenge.

The stunning scenery with volcanic backdrops can break open the heart of the most misanthropist chess player. But if nature doesn't really jazz you up, the worldwide winning rums will make sure you'll get at least a punch of optimism with the local Ti' Punch:)

Martinique's cocktail heavyweight champion, rhum agricole + cane syrup + fresh lime, could prove a bit too lethal for a chessy brain, so here's the B plan:



Rum's authority shaken up by ingenious beer mixers

This could be, however, distracting too (boo hoo, pity the poor exhausted chess tourists from the rigors of vacation).



*But how could one say no to such an inviting smile?
Forced move here my friend, you must try at least a sample
of Le Planteur (another rum-based drink in Martinique).*

Almost obscene to complain under such beguiling circumstances, the everyday double rounds, however, didn't quite allow for some time off to recover from all the voluntary excess, excitement, jet lag or any other excuse you could think of.



The professionals remain professional no matter what.

At the end of the five days marathon, the tournament finished with GM Romain Edouard breaking the tie against GM Fabien Libiszewski, after they both scored an impressive 8.5/9!



*Just because I am in Reykjavik at the moment:
“I don't believe in psychology, I believe in good moves”.*

Insert the game Edouard – Ermenkov



Romain and Fabien got into the chess groove through their simuls prior the tournament



Chess feast

Take that Creole spirit of freedom, add the Gallic joie de vivre and you'll get a picture which can hardly ever be seen in a FIDE rated event: chess players bursting into laughter while playing their good or bad moves. It is not frivolity nor thoughtlessness but rather a Martinican sensibility which goes beyond the chess board. The chess fire cannot fully be enjoyed unless you're sharing it with the others.



Contagious

I couldn't repress a smile either when my radar caught similar chuckles in the tournament hall, although I was in deep suffering against an opponent rated hundreds of points lower than me.

→ **insert L'Ami - Grego**



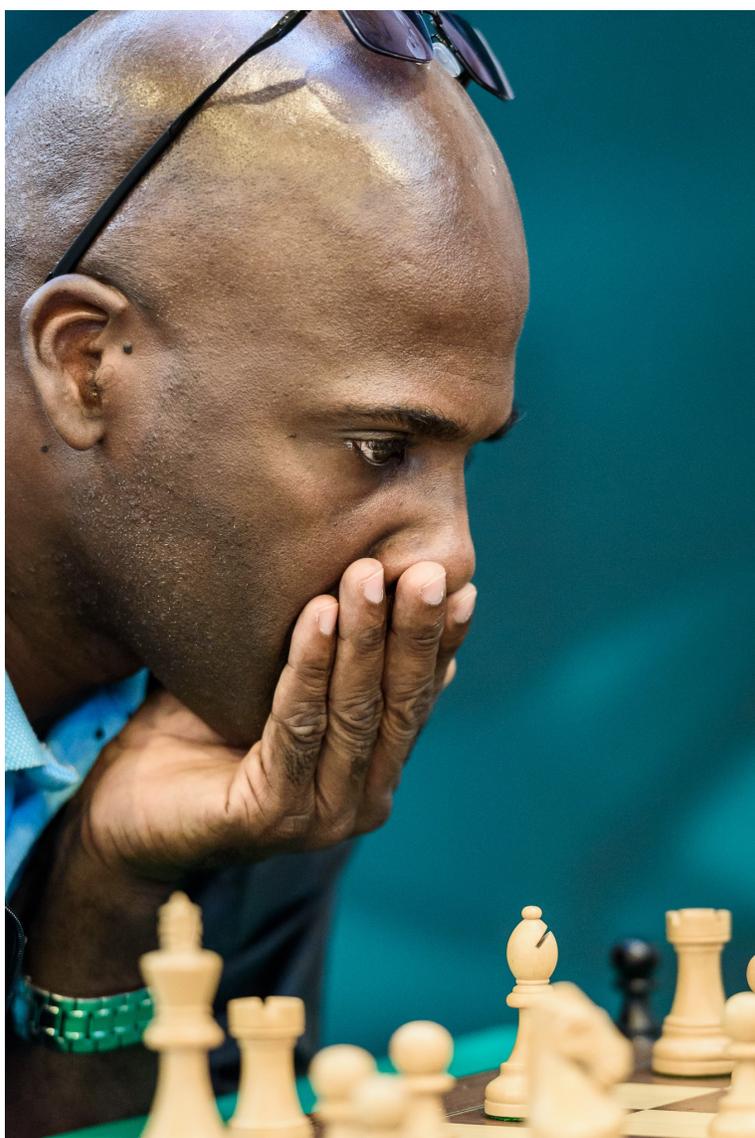
Fun is fun but everyone wants to win

If you need to cut the article in two parts, I would do it here!

Although the co-winners wiped the field, the rest of us mere mortals did enjoy the atmosphere, too. I can't forget the game I had against a 12 y.o. Boy, who opposed fierce opposition, and the talk with his mom afterwards. He was unable to sleep the night before the game due to the thrills he felt for facing a titled player.



Being passionate...



...pays off.

→ **Insert in one bar Midonet – Edouard and Midonet – Libiszewski!**

Similar excitement could be seen all around the venue, impersonated particularly in the shape of the tournament organizer – Gilles Suez-Panama.

How did he manage to juggle with all the exigencies a successful tournament requires and play decent chess as well?!



"I am married to chess" Gilles (3rd from the right) explained, tongue in cheek. Quite a demanding and capricious wife...



Seems like nearly everyone loves chess on the island



In sync – the French GMs had their share of tough moments

In addition to the obvious sponsors, inspired by the whole Martiniquaise atmosphere and after facing a top GM like Romain Edouard, the director of Chess Club Live suddenly decided to pump up the general prizes.



New youth prize categories had appeared, motivating the local talents further

Impulsive? Yes. Appreciated? Definitely.

This is what Martinique does to people, it brings out the best in us. And Michael Mkpadi was unable to resist.



I am not quite sure what this island does to your brain but it is definitely good.

If you would like playing in Martinique next year but don't quite fancy the multiple-rounds-a-day-scheme, the organizers have good news for you: one day – one round, so your spouse and family will have the pleasure of seeing you now and then. Because I assume nobody in their right state of mind will not join you to:



Eden



While you are playing your game, the significant other...

And if you believe in magic, after a 7 and a half hour flight from Paris you'll walk around... Paris?! Although the region doesn't necessarily evoke thoughts of Louvre and Chanel No. 5, Martinique does a marvelous job in combining the elegance of France with everything you may love about the Caribbean. Just think about rewarding yourself after a rough game with confit de canard (wait, what?!) while a giant volcano is towering above...

Martinique has it all with its:



Rich yet tumultuous cultural heritage



Diverse landscape



*Top-notch culinary options
(Michelin street food – arguably the best I ever had)*



Sublime scenery



And absolutely lovely people.

Martinique has become known as the island of revenants, those who always return.



Et pourquoi non?!