



COLUMNISTS

*An Arbiter's
Notebook*
Geurt Gijssen

Istanbul

Nobody will be surprised when I report about the Olympiad and the FIDE Congress in Istanbul. I had again been appointed Chief Arbiter of the Olympiad and made an inspection in June. The playing hall was nice, probably a little bit too small, but I was convinced that all teams could play in the hall that the organisers showed me. I had a good impression of the organisers from the outset. They were very professional, very correct, but strict and not very flexible. I have to admit that during the tournament they became more and more flexible and it was a pleasure to work with them.

In August I went to Ankara for a seminar with the Turkish arbiters. I discussed with them the Laws of Chess, the DGT clock (especially the installation and the working of the clock) and how to react in specific situations. The seminar ended with an examination. The Turkish Intelligence Foundation and the Turkish Chess federation organised this seminar. 48 arbiters participated and were prepared for the Olympiad. This was my fourth seminar in 2000 and I have to confess that I like these seminars very much. The participants are always very enthusiastic and as a former teacher I found this very enjoyable.

One week before the start of the event I went to Istanbul for the final preparations. In Elista 1998 for the first time in an Olympiad all games were played on electronic boards. Such was also the case in Istanbul this year. To play on electronic boards has many advantages: 1. All games are immediately available for the bulletin. 2. All games can be shown on the Internet. 3. The spectators are able to follow the games on screens and monitors in and outside the building where the event is organised. 4. Clock times are shown and this can be a big help for the arbiters. 5. Sometimes it is easier to check the moves in time trouble, illegal moves, three times the same position, claims based on the 50 moves rules and so on, although I know that claims based on anything shown in this manner are not valid (Article 6.14 of the Laws of Chess).

An important condition is of course that the system works perfectly. From the very start of the preparations there were problems with the computer system. I am not a technician, but the people of FIDE Commerce, which provided this system, tried to convince everybody that there was something wrong with the playing hall. Very mysterious was the fact that in some parts of the hall a special chip in the boards stopped working and had to be replaced. And after they were replaced, it happened again. Several specialists, among them a professor of the Technical University of Istanbul, made investigations and could not find anything wrong in the playing hall. I also saw with my own eyes the colours of the monitor screens change when they were moved to the walls of the playing hall. Nobody could explain this.

At the airport representatives of the organisers were present to arrange transportation to the hotels, which were, with only one exception, located within walking distance from the playing hall. There were no problems at the airport. Every day there were buses bringing the players from the hotel to the playing hall and vice versa. I did not hear any complaints about the transportation.

On October 28, the day of the first round, the captains meeting and the opening ceremony were held. The captains were again very cooperative. Many changes had to be made in the teams sent by the federations. All these changes were entered into the computer and based on the new make-up of the teams, new pairing numbers were given to many teams. Only after this job was finished could the pairing committee make the first round pairings. 20 minutes after the end of the opening ceremony (11:40 a.m.) the pairings were published. Then the captains had to decide who should play. And again this took some time. We hoped to receive the team line-ups at about 1 p.m., but unfortunately we did not receive them all. FIDE Commerce did its best to publish the team line-ups as soon as possible and they succeeded, but they had to be checked. This takes time and was also a reason that the first round did not start on time. It is clear that I prefer that the captains meeting will be organised the day before round 1.

As usual some teams did not arrive at all, some teams who were not supposed to arrive were present and one team arrived just before the start of the second round. Generally the organising committee was very strict. No application from the federation meant: no participation in the tournament. Only one federation was shown mercy. Two days and two nights the two teams of one federation stayed in the playing hall. Finally they were admitted to the tournament. 126 men's teams and 86 women's teams participated in the 34th Chess Olympiad.

In the first round we faced a lot of problems. Many boards did not work and as a result many games were not saved. When I saw the bulletin of round 1, I was very upset, because many games were missing and many games contained moves that were never played. After consultation with the organising committee it was decided to call the published bulletin a flash bulletin and to promise the players that a corrected bulletin would be published later, basing it on the actual scoresheets of the players.

During the first 6 rounds there were several problems with the bulletin. When FIDE Commerce had finished its job and had given us the draft of the bulletin, quite often several games were missing and other games had wrong moves. But in the second half of the tournament almost all the problems regarding the bulletin were solved. During the first rounds the organisers hired several persons for the bulletin. During the first 3 rounds I heard complaints about the Internet presentation, but later on everybody praised the way the games were shown on Internet.

Some remarks about the pairings: immediately after each round the pairings committee started making the pairings for the next round. The pairings of the first round were published after the opening ceremony. In all other rounds they were published around midnight. Every morning between 9:30 and 10:00 the captains delivered the team line-ups.

The chief arbiter in the Olympiad is more a manager than an arbiter and it is of course impossible that to see everything. From Jonathan Berry I received a letter with some observations:

Incident 1: Player Z was offered a draw by Player X. Player Z approached the arbiter and asked if she could consult with the captain. The captain was found. Player Z said: "I have been offered a draw". The captain looked at the position (strategically complex, but not tactically so) and said "I'll think about this for a minute" and walked out of the playing area. Player X said: "He's going off to ask for advice, he can't do that!" The arbiter didn't know any rule about that, but applying the principle of "minimum interference in the game", followed the captain out of the playing area and told him that he could think, but not consult with anybody. After a minute, the captain came back, said something to Player Z to the effect of "Do what you think best" and the game resumed.

A minute or two later, the captain came back into the playing area and said that he wanted to change his instruction to "No, don't take a draw." The arbiter said: "No, you can't do that." A few minutes later player Z accepted the draw. The arbiter checked with the Senior Arbiter, who said that the captain cannot consult other people before offering an answer, and that he must answer "Yes" or "No", no other possibility.

Commentary: The captain has free access to the spectator area, and could be kept up to date on the progress of the games by a free grandmaster from his team. Or, seeing that the player is about to ask him a question, could get a GM spectator to advise him before he went answer it. So, prohibiting the captain from conferring seems not only extra-legal (nothing about it in the regulations), but also inconsistent. "Yes" or "No" seems overly restrictive. "Do what you think best", is logically equivalent to "Yes" (in answer to "May I accept a draw?") and to "No" (in answer to "Must I accept a draw?")

Incident 2: A captain, noticing that his player was a pawn up but could not win the position, asked the arbiter if he could tell his player to offer a draw without first being asked. The arbiter was inclined to say "No", but checked with the Senior Arbiter, who said "Yes".

Commentary: If the captain can offer advice without being asked, that seems to contradict 6.3.9.4. (first sentence). Also as in Incident 1, it would seem to allow him to change his mind, or even consult with spectators.

Incident 3: Player X offered Player C a draw on board 1. Player C (who was standing a bit better) countered with a package deal for draws on boards 1 and 2. It was clear to even a casual glance that C's teammate on board 2 stood worse. This action by C seems to be usurping the role of team captain. Player C is in fact a better player than the captain. Is that so, and what should the arbiter

do? Player C's offer was made without asking the arbiter.

Player X told the arbiter that she wanted to expand the draw package to all three boards, but that she would have to consult the team captain. The team captain was not in the hall, had not arrived. She asked if one of the free GM members of the men's team could take the role of the captain in this case. The arbiter said: "Yes" (in spite of 6.3.9.5). The substitute captain came and looked at board 3 (where his team stood slightly worse) and said: "Yes", player C said: "Yes" (again usurping the role of captain, if the brokering of multiple draws is acceptable to anybody, but it happens all the time) and the three draws were agreed.

Commentary: The substitute captain's looking only at board 3 indicates that he didn't really understand what he was being asked to do. He should also have looked at board 2, and probably also at board 1.

Item 4: The room set-up, which resulted in Women's match 2 not being visible to spectators, is unfortunate. Georgia has several avid supporters who sneak into the playing area, and start chatting in the playing area (often at the back, but not always). Of course, I break this up as soon as I notice it. I have had a complaint from an opposing team captain.

Item 5: Even just allowing the captains from the top six matches free entry into that area often results in crowding of the players and difficulty in moving around. We never have all

12 captains there at once, but even with 5 or 6 regulars the scene is often more reminiscent of a weekend tournament in a church basement than of The Chess Olympiad. In my opinion, each captain should have a chair with a clear view of his match; otherwise, he should be in the spectator area.

Item 6: One nameless captain forgot his identification badge, took flash pictures well after the 15 minutes (claimed that he didn't know the flash was on), split his time between chatting and spotting inside the playing area at the other matches, and when his match was over immediately left the playing hall without signing the protocol.

It is in my opinion time to reconsider the role of the captain, not only in the Olympiad, but also in all team competitions.

I was quite satisfied with the arbiters. However some remarks are in order. The rounds started at 15:00. It was agreed that the arbiters should be present at 13:30 to prepare the hall. The preparations were: putting the names of the teams and the players on the displays for the spectators, installing the clocks (I discovered several times that the clocks were incorrectly installed), preparing the scoresheets (each game had its own code, for instance W09232 meant a game in the women's competition, round 9, match 23 board 2), checking the initial position. Unfortunately many times arbiters arrived late; senior arbiters and colleagues we required to take over the duties of the latecomers.

An Olympiad generates a lot of documents:

1. Scoresheets.

2. Pairings: published by the Pairing Committee.

3. Team line-ups: each captain receives at the start of the event 14 copies of this document, for each round 1 copy. Before the round he delivers one copy to the chief arbiter, indicating who is playing in the next round.

4. Match protocol: for each match there is such a document. The match arbiter writes the results of the games on this paper, signs this and at the end of the match the two captains sign for the individual results and final result of the match. This protocol and the scoresheets are delivered to the senior arbiter of the section in which the match was played and he checks all results.

5. Round protocol: in this document all matches and players are published. They are available for journalists, captains, pairings committee, organising committee and so on.

6. Bulletins: all games and standings are published in this document.

7. Rating report: this document contains for each player the result of each game, the opponents, average ratings of the opponents, score percentage, number of rated opponents, number of

grandmasters, number of international masters, number of titleholders.

The time limit was 40 moves in 100 minutes, then 20 moves in 50 minutes, finally 10 minutes for the remaining moves with an addition of 30 seconds for each move from move 1. And again there were no incidents. If possible, we should maintain this time limit for Olympiads.

For the second time in my career, I became ill during a tournament. It was so serious that the organisers decided to hospitalise me. I stayed in the hospital one night. During my entire stay in the hospital two members of the Organising Committee were always with me and took excellent care of me. I would like to thank them for the hospitality they showed. The friendship, especially during this short period, I felt from many players was very encouraging.

I would like to thank the President of FIDE for my appointment as chief arbiter. Furthermore I like to thank all persons who made this Olympiad very successful.

I would now like to finish this column with a discussion of a suggestion made by English Interantional Arbiters John Robinson and Stewart Reuben. It has again to do with Article 10.2; I think they have a good proposal:

Most agree giving extra time after each move in the last phase of a game is desirable. Many events have an inadequate number of digital clocks to use for all games. Many players dislike the cumulative mode from move 1. In Kasparov v Kramnik, 10 seconds per move were added only after move 60. No clock currently offers this mode.

In the following cumulative (Fischer) and delay (Bronstein) modes can be used as preferred. Delay has the advantage in a tight schedule that the session will be shorter. There should be no problems with over-run, provided there is a reasonable gap between rounds. It is essential to announce the mode to be used prior to the playing session. This is required by The Laws of Chess. The following in no way infringes the Laws.

40 moves in 2 hours, followed by 20 moves in the next hour, all the moves in 10 minutes, adding 30 seconds for each move played from move 61. After the completion of Black's move, a digital clock is set in the Fischer or Bronstein mode to add 30 seconds for each move for the remainder of the game. The times shown on each clock must be adjusted to the times shown on the discarded clock plus 10 minutes.

It may be necessary to make the transfer after one flag has fallen, rather than move 60 by Black. The clock times will then show 10 minutes plus 30 seconds for each move made after the 60th. (Comment GG: I am afraid I do not understand what the gentlemen mean. In my opinion we have the following situation: let us say Black's flag falls at move 68 and White has still 5 minutes time on his clock. I stop the clock, I give White 15 minutes and Black 10 minutes with an addition of 30 seconds from move 69) Both players are required to keep score from that point. With a lower add-on than 30 seconds, there is no requirement to keep score. It may be found easier to set the digital clock when it is White's move.

Other games are played with mechanical clocks being adjusted after Black's 40th move – or after a flag fall. A rate of play may be 40 moves in 100 minutes, followed by all moves in 20 minutes. This is likely to be a large weekend Swiss, with too few arbiters and also too few electronic clocks. Typically 35% of all games may exceed 40 moves.

The following is recommended: When one or both players have less than 5 minutes left on the clock, a change is made, allowing a 10 seconds add-on. From the viewpoint of fairness, it does not matter exactly when the incremental mode is introduced. It will be the same for both players and thus equitable. (Comment GG: I think it is not a good idea to change clocks when players are in time trouble. I still prefer to do so after a flag fall) An add-on of less than 5 seconds is not recommended. Several clocks are too inaccurate. Also such a system is unfair to elderly players. Players do not need to keep score, provided they have less than five minutes left at one stage of the game.

Another system would be to be introduced the add-on mode only on request when a player has less than two minutes left as in 10.2 (Comment GG: see my previous comment) This would require greater sophistication on the part of the players. It may cause consternation at a late stage of the game.

During the World Chess Championships in New Delhi, there was also a meeting of the Presidential Board of FIDE. In this meeting the following time limit was discussed: 40 moves in 90 minutes, then 15 minutes for the remaining moves with an addition of 30 seconds per move in the second period.

Istanbul, New Delhi, Teheran... More next month...

Have a question for Geurt Gijssen? Perhaps he will respond to it in a future column. Send it to hwr@chesscafe.com. Please include your name and country of residence.

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