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COLUMNISTS

*An Arbiter's
Notebook*
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The 35th Chess Olympiad in Bled

I am of the opinion that FIDE must be praised for its decision to organise the 35th Chess Olympiad in Bled, a lovely small city in a small country, Slovenia. This small country has a great and rich chess history. Bled 1931 and Portoroz 1958 are regarded as chess landmarks. And we should not forget the 1959 Candidates Tournament, played in Belgrade, Zagreb and Bled. Chessplayers who visit Bled should visit Grand Hotel Toplice. In 1931 and 1959, this hotel was the venue at which Alexander Alekhine and Mikhail Tal achieved their magnificent results. I also went to Portoroz to visit the Palace Hotel, the venue of the 1958 Interzonal, but I was very disappointed when I saw the hotel in disrepair. I was told that the hotel had been closed since 1993 and nothing was done to keep the hotel in order.

The great chess heroes of Slovenia are still honoured. I would like to mention Milan Vidmar, an amateur, who played at the highest level, as well as Vasja Pirc and Bruno Parma, who are both still very popular in Slovenia. Parma has a very nice gallery in Ljubjana and sells paintings, chess books and equipment, computers and so on.

Let me give you some statistics about the Olympiad. 144 teams were registered for the men's competition. In the end, 135 teams showed up. One team even arrived after the 4th round. We checked carefully and confirmed that this team left its home country in time, but due to visa problems it arrived late. It was decided that they should be allowed play. From the 100 registered women's teams 90 teams played. These figures are absolute records. But the reader will understand that it was quite difficult to make proper pairings for the first round.

I arrived October 22 in Bled and started my preparations together with the two deputy chief arbiters of the Olympiad, Zsuzsa Veröcy (Hungary) and Janko Bohak (Slovenia). We divided the senior arbiters and match arbiters in two groups, one group for the women's section and one group for the men's. In the meantime I tried to find the chessplayers' data in the last FIDE rating list. I again faced the problem that in some cases it is very difficult to find out what the family names and surnames are. Another problem was that several federations sent us the line-ups of their teams in alphabetical order instead of board order. These problems were solved in the captains' meeting, held after

the opening ceremony, on the 25th of October.

The most crucial item in this captains' meeting was the anti-doping control. I was authorised to convey the following information:

- The controls should take place in the second half of the event.
- In each round of the second half 2 women and 4 men should be tested.
- In the last round players from the top teams should also be tested.
- There should be no reason to fear severe penalties.

When the controls started in the second half of the Olympiad I had a meeting every morning with Dr. Bellin, the chairperson of the FIDE medical commission, who has played in many Olympiads and has the title of WGM, and Prof. Osredkar, the president of the anti-doping commission of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia. We drew lots in the meetings to decide which two women and four men were to be subjected to the drug testing. These were random drawing among the first 40 matches in the women's competition and the first 50 in the men's competition. Only for the last round were eight more players were tested. They were all in the top matches played in the last round and were potential medal winners. Dr. Bellin was able to create a very relaxed atmosphere. Therefore we did not have many problems convincing the players to go to the doping control.

The opening ceremony took place in the playing hall. Even a Lipizaner, one of the famous white horses from Lipica, a little town in Slovenia, was there.

Immediately after the opening ceremony we started to prepare the playing hall. All games were played on electronic boards. This means that a network with about 50 computers was installed. We were very lucky to find 4 rooms in which we could place these computers. But at midnight I was confronted with a very disappointing message. The software for team compositions, match protocols and round protocols was not available. I have to admit that I was not only disappointed, but also furious and desperate. But Mr. Stubenvoll (Austria), a member of the pairings committee, and Mr. Herzog, who produced the pairings program Swiss Manager, saved the situation. A great number of the software programs we needed for the Olympiad were available or could be made available. Mr. Herzog especially deserves our thanks.

The majority of the hotels were within walking distance from the playing hall, really an ideal situation for the players. The hotels were very good, offering excellent food and good service. The fact that the hotels were so close to the playing hall was also a big advantage for me. Every morning between 8.30 and 9.00 the captains brought the team line-ups to the playing hall. From the hotels outside of Bled assistant arbiters faxed the team line-ups to the playing hall. Except for rounds 1 and 2, the line-ups were published around 10.00 a.m. From round 3 the rounds started at 14.30 (round 1 and 2 were at 14.00); therefore the teams had more than 4 hours to prepare for the next round. The

rounds finished about 19.00 and the pairings were published about 20.30.

The pairings of the 13th round in the women's section caused, as I understood from the pairings committee, a lot of problems. I shall try to explain these problems. Two teams in the women's section were leading, but could not be paired against each other, because they had already played against each other. In the next score group there was one team, but the two teams had also met this team. The next score group contained 3 teams, so we had 6 teams. At this moment four of these 6 teams could be paired against each other and 2 teams had to drop down. But the rules say that in the event a complete pairing is impossible, these teams have to join the next group. As a result, all six teams were paired down. And many captains and players did not understand this. I made a big effort to explain that the pairings were correct according to the rules, but I had to admit at the same time that they were not very logical. As a result of these discussions, we have to change the pairings rules of the Olympiad. Pairing rules have to be very transparent and easily to understand. I already mentioned this in the General Assembly of the FIDE Congress.

There was an Appeals Committee of four members: Mr. Campomanes (Philippines), honorary chairman, Mr. Loubatière (France), chairman and the members Koya (India) and Vega (Mexico). There were no appeals at all, although there were some small incidents. I would like to mention several.

It often happened that a player did not write the moves, especially in *zeitnot*. And, as readers know, in games with the Fischer modus with an increment of 30 seconds the players, have to write the moves during the whole game. A usual "penalty" was to force the players to write the moves and in exceptional cases to give to the opponent to extra minutes.

There was one case in which a player wrote his move down before he made it. So far, so good. But it happened quite often that he changed his mind and made another move than he had written before. In one game it happened eight times. I informed him that I considered this making notes. The player involved disagreed with me and organised a small enquiry among arbiters and players. He told me that the majority, perhaps even everybody – I cannot remember precisely – shared his opinion that he did not do anything wrong. But I remain unconvinced: the rule is that each player has to record his moves. To record something means in my opinion to write down something that happens or happened and not what a player has in mind to play. By the way, the discussion between us was very friendly and relaxed.

There were some small "incidents" with the Chinese teams. Chinese players have the habit of rubbing a strong smelling balsam on their faces. Before the men's match Russia – China I received a request from the Russian delegation that the Chinese players should not rub the balsam on their faces or, if they do so, to do it away from the board. I discussed it with the Chinese delegation

and the leader of the Chinese delegation informed me that the Chinese players agreed not to use this balsam. The Chinese leader requested me to make sure that the Russian players would not speak with each other during the game.

During the match there were two small incidents: Ye offered Kasparov a draw while Kasparov's clock was running. The match arbiter warned Ye. At the end of their game Kasparov made some gestures over the board. I was of the opinion that it was disturbing for the opponent. I told this to Kasparov. He disagreed with me.

The time limit in the Olympiad was 90 minutes for the whole game with an increment of 30 seconds per move from the first move. To be honest, I expected a lot of difficult situations, but fortunately this was not the case. I got a question from a journalist what the players' opinion was regarding this time limit. I spoke with several players. The older players especially preferred a slower speed, although some of the "oldies" achieved excellent results. Uwe Boensch made an interesting remark: "The time limit is OK and FIDE should keep this time limit and should not change every two or three years."

The service for the journalists was excellent. There was an ample press and information centre. There were many computers with internet connections. All journalists with laptops were able to connect their laptops to the internet, and all this was free of charge.

After every round there was a press conference. GM Cebalo commented on the just finished round, Boris Kutin gave the necessary information and I told the journalists some interesting points of the round.

Dr. Bellin also attended one of the press conferences and explained the procedures of the doping controls. She got a lot of questions about what was permitted and what was prohibited. I was impressed how very exactly she answered all questions

From round 3 there were bulletins with all games. Bulletins with the games of round 1 and 2 were delivered later.

There were some problems with the bulletins and the information on the internet. In my opinion, it would have been possible to avoid them. The pairings committee collected the results from different sources. If there were differences between these sources, the committee checked the match protocols and in some cases also the score sheets. I am sure that the pairings committee had the correct results. The match arbiters saved the games, but it happened from time to time that the match arbiter forgot to save the game or indicated a wrong result.

The results collected by the pairings committee were used for the bulletin, but

in a different format. This is how mistakes were made. As a result, wrong results were published in the bulletin.

Finally a few remarks about the playing hall. The hall was a little bit too small. We used a second hall where seven matches were played. If all registered teams had arrived, we would have had a big problem. The main playing area was 1800 square meters. In this area we had 750 players, about 150 captains, about 90 arbiters and 30 journalists. Everybody will understand that it was impossible to admit spectators in this area. There were two galleries for spectators, reserve players and journalists. On seven displays the most interesting games were shown.

Quick Quiz: Who was the oldest player in the Hungarian team? Answer at the end.

I am afraid that the reader will have the impression that there were many weak points in this Olympiad. This is absolutely not the case. Many chessplayers assured me that the 35th Chess Olympiad was one of the best. And I agree with them. It was a great Olympiad and the organising committee should be very proud. Boris Kutin, the initiator of this Olympiad did a great job. Boris, congratulations and many thanks on behalf of all, who were in Bled.

What happened at the Congress? You know probably that Kirsan Ilyumshinov was re-elected as FIDE President. The same happened to his slate. Some vice-presidents were added to the Presidential Board: Zurab Azmaiparashvili (Georgia), Ignatius Leong (Singapore) and Morten Sand (Norway). I was told that almost all committee and commission chairmen were re-appointed. For the next four years I shall be again chairman of the Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee. Furthermore I attended a part of the meeting of the General Assembly. Only the part in which I have to make the report of my committee I attended. I was too busy with the Olympiad to attend more meetings.

The meeting of the Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee was very constructive, although it is very difficult to convince colleagues. The following decisions were taken and approved by the Executive Board and the General Assembly:

1. All mobile phones and other specified equipment must be switched off in the playing venue. If there is an infringement of this injunction, Article 13.4 of the Laws of Chess shall be applied to all players and spectators
2. Regarding games played with Fischer or Bronstein mode, the following was decided: If the primary time control + 60 times any increment is from 15 to 60 minutes, the game shall be referred to as Rapidplay.

For example: at the start of the game, each player receives 25 minutes and an increment of 10 seconds per move, then $25 \text{ minutes} + 60 \times 10 \text{ seconds} = 35 \text{ minutes}$. The Rapidplay rules will apply.

Another example: at the start of the game, each player receives 40 minutes and an increment of 30 seconds per move, then $40 \text{ minutes} + 60 \times 30 \text{ seconds} = 70 \text{ minutes}$. The normal rules will apply.

If the primary time control + 60 times any increment is less than 15 minutes, the game shall be referred to as Blitz.

For example: at the start of the game, each player receives 5 minutes and an increment of 5 seconds per move, then $5 \text{ minutes} + 60 \times 5 \text{ seconds} = 10 \text{ minutes}$. The Blitz rules will apply

Then, Article 10 of The Laws of Chess does not apply in either case.

The following point is probably the most difficult one. Let me first of all quote the Rules and Tournament Committee Report:

“Discussions took place about the situation in Blitz chess where a player makes a move which leaves his king in check. There was no consensus. Some arbiters believed that if the player captured his opponent’s king, then the player should lose. Others believed that the player should win. It was decided not to disturb the current rules in place. Thus, if a player effectively claims a win by capturing the king, then he runs the risk of the arbiter declaring otherwise.” So far I am quoting the minutes.

But there was more. There were also some arbiters who had the opinion that in case of a captured king both players should lose the game.

In the meeting of the Executive Board I made a verbal report of the Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee. I explained what we had discussed and when I explained the situation of the captured king I was afraid that the discussion of the committee would be repeated. The only one who asked what really should happen in the event a king was taken was Mr. Antunac from Croatia. I replied to him that in my opinion the game should be declared lost for the player who captured the opponent’s king. The Executive Board accepted the decision of the Committee, with the inclusion of my answer, as far as I understood.

In the meeting of the General Assembly I gave a brief report about the Olympiad. Then I told the delegates that I assumed that they had read the minutes of the Committee and if they had any questions, I was ready to answer them. There were no questions and comments. The minutes of the

Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee and its decisions were apparently accepted.

[Quick Quiz Answer](#) The oldest member of the Hungarian team was Judith Polgar.

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

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