

REPORT OF THE RULES COMMISSIONER

Dennis Doren, submitted on 24 June 2019

From June 2018 - June 2019

The Commission Membership

The following are the people who were selected and served this year as members of the Rules Commission, besides myself:

- (1) IA SIM Thomas Biedermann, Entry Commissioner & Deputy Rules Commissioner;
- (2) SIM Gerhard Binder, Rating Commissioner & Honorary Member;
- (3) IA IM Juan Alberto Martello, ARG National Delegate & Silver Bertl von Massow Medal ;
- (4) SIM Josef Mrkvicka, CZE National Delegate & Gold Bertl von Massow Medal;
- (5) IA SIM Ivan Panitevsky;
- (6) IA SIM Nikolay Poleshchuk, Gold Bertl von Massow Medal;
- (7) IA SIM Uwe Staroske, Qualifications Commissioner & Manager of ICCF adjudication system;
- (8) IA SIM Olli Ylönen.

All of these people also served on the Rules Commission the previous year except IA SIM Ivan Panitevsky who was added following last year's Congress.

Status of Regular Rules Commissioner Duties

During this past year, the Rules Commission collectively or I alone addressed the following regular duties:

- A. Updated all rules within the ICCF Rules based on Congress decisions or Executive Board rule clarifications. This update was submitted to, and approved by the Executive Board.
- B. Kept tournament directors (TDs), tournament organizers (TOs), and adjudicators informed of rule and procedural developments. This was typically accomplished through mass mailings.
- C. Responded to inquiries about rules and procedures from TDs, TOs, adjudicators, ICCF officials, and players.
- D. Participated in offering input/answers to inquiries concerning server updates.

E. Reviewed all new proposals for Congress 2019, both to ensure that any existing rule that would be affected by a proposal is mentioned in the proposal and to indicate if there appeared to be an error in how an existing rule was cited or interpreted.

F. Made requests to the Executive Board (EB) for rule clarifications. There was only one such request made this year:

(1) Pertaining to whether or not it is a Code of Conduct violation for teammates to consult among themselves concerning analysis of each other's active positions?

The 3/3/19 response from the EB was the following:

"The EB members have an unanimous agreement on...this clarification (and some of them a very strong support):

Some MFs believe such behavior is a clear violation of the ICCF code of conduct, that we are not allowed to consult with other people concerning our active games. Such behavior is seen as violating the principle that each player is responsible for his own moves

As I was part of the working group in charge of drafting the first issue of the Code of Conduct in 2003-2004, I [Eric] can confirm that it was never in our intention to make a difference between individual and team tournaments and what is considered as a clear violation of the rule in an individual tournament is also a violation in a team tournament."

I advertised this clarification to all National Delegates very soon after receiving the ruling.

I note that Congress proposal 2019-027 clearly stems from that clarification notification, so Congress will have its opportunity to makes its determination on the topic directly.

New Projects

A. Gathered ideas suggested by others during the year for consideration by the Rules Commission for potential Congress proposals; presented those idea to the Commission; wrote and submitted Congress proposals for the ideas garnering at least majority support (while rejecting the others). This work resulted in 12 Congress proposals this year, with 4 ideas rejected. Overall, the theme for the submitted Congress proposals was the clarification of existing rules.

B. I conducted a new process this year: a survey of all National Delegates (NDs) concerning their understanding of the use of a single word ("should") within over 200 statements in the ICCF Rules. The purpose of this survey was to eliminate ambiguity in the Rules by seeking consensus about the meaning of the potentially unclear rule statements. (The word "should" reportedly has 6 different meanings in English.) I am very grateful that a full third of all NDs participated in the survey, giving me a high degree of confidence about how each rule is interpreted. The findings from this survey are presented in

Congress proposals 2019-008A and 2019-008B, so as to be codified by Congress, to rid of a substantial amount of the semantic ambiguity in the Rules.

C. In service to the World Tournament Director (WTD), I continued serving as the contact person for any work in updating the automated withdrawal system.

D. Continued to develop the Triple Block system during its testing period. Two adaptations were added this year, to address issues of concern to some.

The first was to allow a team captain (TC) the ability to move time from a player's bank to the player's clock if the TC will be making a player substitution/replacement. The purpose of this change was to address the fact that players' clocks are not stopped during the substitution process in triple block events, such that the original player's clocks might expire before the substitution was accomplished. With the change, TCs can prevent this.

The second was to add a "guaranteed time" option for tournament organizers (TOs) to use. This option guarantees all players to have at least a fixed amount of time (3 days) for each move after the increment has expired (that is, after move 50). This option, only possible if selected by the TO during the organization of the event, negates the triple block feature of a fixed event end date, but addresses the concern that a "play-it-out-to-the-tedious-end" strategy could be used by players in lost positions who are hoping their opponents will run out of time in a lengthy game. This "guaranteed time" ensures players always can count on some time being available per move, making such a strategy far less likely to be enacted.

The triple block system was granted a trial period by Congress in August 2016, the length of which was left open. At this time, I expect that the trial period will be drawn to a close at Congress 2020. The following year will allow time for a number of the triple block events to reach their end dates, for time to test the new adaptations mentioned in the two paragraphs above, and for the triple block work group to solicit and compile feedback about system to be presented next year.

E. I conducted a data-based assessment of the effect of last year's proposal 2018-010. See the addendum at the end of this report for that analysis and related conclusions.

Final Comment

Just as in my report the past three years, I wish to thank the Executive Board and Congress for giving me the honor and privilege of serving the ICCF in this role. I am grateful to be in a position where my efforts serve the international correspondence chess community and this great organization. Thank you.

Dennis Doren, Rules Commissioner

ADDENDUM 1: The Effect of 2018-010: "Setting a Limit to ETLs by a Player".

Last year, Congress approved 2018-010 which prevented new registrations by players who had 10 or more ETLs during a 90-day period. The discussion concerning this proposal included many comments by delegates indicating the belief that the proposal did not go far enough in addressing high ETL frequency players.

This addendum summarizes data gathered concerning the effect of 2018-010.

The data:

(1) As of 27 June 2019, there were 16 players who reached or exceeded the threshold of 10 ETLs within the previous 90 days, and hence received the penalty of not being allowed to register for new events until at least 90 days passed without any ETLs.

(2) We knew all along that this new rule would only have effect on players who did not go ETL in 50% of their games within one event, as the 50% rule would likely cause them to be withdrawn from all ICCF events and be suspended for longer than the 90 days of the new policy. Of those 16 players, 14 also reached the 50% ETL threshold and were eligible to be withdrawn, with 1 other player reaching that threshold during his last game in that specific event. Only 1 player (with 12 ETLs in the previous 90 days overall) never reached the 50% threshold.

(3) Back on 6 April 2019, I did the same analysis. There were 17 players who hit or surpassed the 10 ETL within 90 day threshold. Again, only 1 never reached the 50% ETL threshold within any one event.

(4) Additionally, 10 of the 16 with 10+ ETLs reached that threshold "all at once", meaning they did so across (at least the vast majority of) all their games within a very short time period, including at the same time.

(5) Of the 16 players currently having had 10+ ETLs within the past 90 days:

(a) 5 are from Mexico. with all 5 being players who reached that threshold "all at once" during national (not international) events. Two of those 5 were brand new players who obviously decided very early on not to continue to play. The other 3 of those 5 players had literally just gotten their first provisional rating (1949, 1534 & 1490) when they stopped playing all of their games.

(b) 2 are from Indonesia. One of those was a rare player who never reached the 50% threshold. He is rated 1840, and had ETLs in both national and international events. The other had his ETLs across both national and international events as well, but reached the 50% threshold with the vast majority of his 35 (!!!) ETLs (within the past 90 days) "all at once". Given his 2240 rating, and the fact that he had so many ETLs at about the same time suggests something happened to his ability to play.

(c) The remaining 9 of 16 players were each from a unique country: AUS, AUT, ENG, ESP, FRA, ITA, NED, POR, & USA. Ratings (in differing order) were 1465, 2299, unrated, 2032, 1552, 2152, 1907, unrated, & 2140.

(d) Maybe most importantly: 10 of the 16 had all of their ETLs in national events, with 1 more having all of his in friendly matches (which is hard to do!), and 1 more having his in ICCF Thematic Tournaments (which are unrated, but still ICCF-approved events and hence count for the withdrawal system). In other words, only 4 had the bulk (or all) of their ETLs in international events other than friendly matches and the unrated thematic tournaments.

My conclusions:

(1) There is almost no effect of 2018-010 beyond what would already be the case ***if the 50% ETL rule were regularly enforced.*** (This is a separate issue, not being addressed here.) Literally, there is only about 1 player every 3 months who is affected. Enforcement of the 50% ETL rule seems of high importance.

(2) Most of the players with 10+ ETLs within 90 days actually reach that threshold within a time period of days - essentially "all at once". Whether this is due to being a brand new player who simply quits playing, or someone whose life prevented him/her from continuing play, or some other reason, it seems clear that 2018-010 is not affecting the people who make a "steady diet" of going ETL beyond what the 50% ETL rule can do.

(3) There does not seem to be any case where 2018-010 negatively affected anyone unjustly. In other words, there did not seem to be a significant downside to the new rule, but the positive side was also quite minimal.

(4) If there is to be an effective and more stringent ETL rule, it would likely be by lowering the 50% rule's percentage to something less.