

Scarborough Community of Toronto
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“ FRIENDLY Chess Since 1960 ”

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO BOTH MEMBERS & NON-MEMBERS

Issue # 4 – October 15, 2001

Do You Know ? / Savez-Vous ?

Should the Girls' Canadian Youth Chess Championships Be Abolished ?? (Pt. 2)

The Fictitious Motion

- A) that the CFC abolish the intended 2002 Girls' Canadian Youth Chess Championships in Montreal next year;
- B) that next year, there will only be the 2002 CYCC (mixed – boys and girls);
- C) that the highest finishing player (boy or girl) in each section will be the 2002 Canadian Youth Chess Champion, and represent Canada at the mixed FIDE World Youth Chess Championships (WYCC) [this is currently the case], subject to the following :
- i) if the winner is a girl, she has the option of representing Canada at the FIDE WYCC or at the FIDE Girls' World Youth Chess Championships (Girls' WYCC); if she decides to go to the Girls' WYCC, then the second-finishing player (boy or girl) will be able to represent Canada at the WYCC;
 - ii) if the winner is a girl, and she decides to play in the WYCC, then the next top-finishing girl will be able to represent Canada at the Girls' WYCC;
 - iii) if the winner is a boy, the top-finishing girl will be able to represent Canada at the Girls' WYCC

We are using this fictitious “ motion “ to the CFC Governors as a vehicle to help debate the issue of separate girls-only tournaments. For the purpose of the debate on this

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“ motion “ the issue of funding will not arise. We will assume that CFC will continue to pay the travel expenses of the rep. to the WYCC and the Girls’ WYCC (in fact, we intend to explore this very separate issue of “ funding “ in a future Issue of the newsletter).

Series Continuation

In our last Issue # 3, we started looking at whether separate girls-only tournaments are a good thing, or a bad thing. At the heart of the motion is the debate whether separate girl-only tournaments should exist in Canada at all. Does the Girls’ CYCC promote or hinder the equality of girl chess players ? What purposes does the Girls’ CYCC serve ? Can the CYCC alone meet everyone’s needs ?

We will now recap the present CFC situation, since it was just recently clarified, and many people are not aware it has changed.

The Current CFC Situation

Canada, through the CFC, holds two parallel tournaments for “ Youth “ (Under 18, 16, 14, 12 & 10 years of age). One is the mixed gender “ Canadian Youth Chess Championships (CYCC) “, and the other is the separate girls only tournament, the “ Girls’ Canadian Youth Chess Championships (Girls’ CYCC) “.

A Vote “ in Favour “ of the Motion (with a Minor Amendment) !

Since we are looking at the arguments against the Girls’ CYCC, we invited a guest contributor to write a submission in favour of the motion. David Gebhardt, the Club/Team Coordinator, Greater Toronto Chess League, agreed to share his views with our readers. He writes :

“ Should girls have a separate CYCC section from boys? I would argue that the answer should be no. There should be a separate women’s championship for the sole reason that there are not enough strong women to participate in the Canadian Closed, and a separate event, if structured properly, can be used to encourage more women to play.

At the junior level, there are already a large enough number of stronger girls playing to abolish a separate junior girls CYCC event in Canada. There should instead be a single mixed section. If the winner were male, he would go to the junior boys WYCC and the strongest girl would go to the junior girls WYCC. If the winner were female, she would have the option of playing in either the junior boys or the junior girls WYCC. But at this point I would amend the motion slightly. No matter which she chose, the strongest male player would still go to the junior boys WYCC. However, if she also chose to play in the junior boys WYCC, there would be no representative to the junior girls WYCC for that age group.

One of the reasons for structuring things this way would be to allow the girls to play against stronger competition so that they are prepared to compete against strong girls, or even strong boys, at the WYCC.

One of the arguments against this system is that it would be unfair to have a girl qualify by playing more games against the so-called “easier” girls than against boys. However, this can be answered by using the Dubov pairing system, which strives to give players the same average opponent’s rating. Therefore, even though one girl might play more girls than another, the average rating of their opponents should balance as closely as possible. After all, it is not whether you play a male or female player, but the strength of those players that is the important factor. ”

David has relied in his submission on the “ CYCC Only ”Argument # 1, raised in the last Issue # 3 – “ Playing Strength Improvement “. The CYCC provides stronger opposition than the Girls’ CYCC, and it is a better preparation ground for the strong opponents in the FIDE WorldYCC. Fundamentally, this argument asserts that since the Girls’ CYCC is weaker, it should just be put out of its misery. But, despite the weaker nature of the Girls’ CYCC, are there still other valid reasons to keep it ? We will look at this later in this series, when we review the arguments FOR a Girls’ CYCC.

But, let’s go on to look at two more arguments for a CYCC only.

The “ CYCC Only ” Argument # 2– “ Creating a Girls’ Ghetto “

This second argument that the Girls’ CYCC should be abolished arises out of an argument raised by IM Tom O’Donnell with respect to women’s chess on ChessTalk on April 15, 2000 :

“ You segregate women out, and you hold them back “.

This argument is equally applicable to girls’ chess. However, we think it is important to note before going further that no one is forcing girls “ out “. From FIDE down to the local provincial CYCC Qualifiers, girls have the option of playing in the mixed gender tournaments.

The issue, it seems, is whether CFC, merely by offering girls-only tournaments, does a disservice to girls’ chess. This argument # 2 clearly answers “ yes “. To separate girls out is to give them a message that they are inferior, and that they do not have the ability to compete with boys on a level playing field. It encourages them to see themselves as second-class citizens of the chess community. According to this argument, the CFC should, in the interest of girl chess players, eliminate the Girls’ CYCC as a tournament option for them.

Problems With Argument # 2

One problem that arises with this argument is – who is making the decision here ? Is the male CFC establishment, and membership, sitting in judgment and determining for girls that there is more detriment to separate girls-only tournaments, than benefits – regardless of what girls might want ? FM Denis Allan, former CFC Women’s Coordinator, maintains, from his experience, that the majority of women currently want separate women-only tournaments. And he wrote rather eloquently on this problem of “ who is the decider ? “ on ChessTalk on August 14, 2001. He stated :

“ All important advances by women have been led by women... That is why I say that as long as the women themselves want separate competitions, we should have them. That is why I say it is patronizing for men to say : “ I know what you want, but we know what is really good for you “ ...my bottom line is that we need women in chess. We should do whatever is necessary to keep them. And I say, let them be the ones to tell us what is best for them. “

Does this apply as well to girls' chess ? Well, at this point, there really isn't much of a track record on what girls want. We know very few have chosen to date to switch over from the Girls' CYCC to the CYCC. But this may well be the consequence of poor communication and advertising by the CFC. It was only last month that it became generally known that the CFC Executive had passed a motion that the CYCC was indeed “ mixed “ – up until then, it was thought that the girl who recently played in a CYCC was only an “ anomaly “, and that the two CYCC's were gender-specific (no cross-overs). And even yet, to our knowledge, the regulations have not deleted the reference to the CYCC as the “ Boys CYCC “.

There are now some girls starting to express intentions of playing in their CYCC, rather than the Girls' CYCC. Alina Sviridovitch, # 1 on the Canadian Girls U 10 List, in our last newsletter, gave notice that if she played, she'd play in the CYCC. And Duncan Smith, father of Hazel Smith (# 2 on the Canadian Girls U 10 List, and Girls' CYCC U 10 Champion for both 2000 and 2001), posted on ChessTalk recently Hazel's intention to play next year in the CYCC U 12. It was as a result of his, and others, postings that the CFC clarified for its membership the CYCC situation. Do the majority of the new crop of girls playing chess want separate girls-only tournaments ? The jury is still out on that one.

A second problem with Argument # 2 arises from the general girl/boy playing strength and rating disparity. It is important to note that the playing strength of Alina and Hazel is competitive with similar aged boys, if they continue to improve as they have. This is not the case for many girls, in terms of placing in the top fifteen of their age group. For example the # 3 Girl in the Girls' U10 List is 480 rating points behind Alina and Hazel, and is only # 16 on the mixed Canadian U 10 List. In all other 4 Youth age groups, only 8 other girls came in the top fifteen of the mixed List for their age group : U 12 : Valentina Goutor (# 4), Claire Woodworth (# 14); U 14 : Alexandra Benggawan (# 15); U 16 : Amanda Benggawan (# 10), Dina Kagramanov (# 12, when CFC renewed), Dinara Khaziyeva (will be # 13), Patricia Chiroiu (will be # 14); U 18 : Bojana Mitrovic (# 14, when CFC renewed).

Could this extreme range of girls' playing strength, and the disparity that still exists between it and that of similar aged boys, be a foundation for arguments for keeping the Girls' CYCC as an option ? We'll look at this in a future Issue.

The “ CYCC Only “ Argument # 3 – “ Shooting for Mediocrity “

I'd like to quote IM Tom O'Donnell again from his April 15, 2000 ChessTalk post on this argument : “ You praise [women] for mediocre performance, because they are women, and you [hold them back]. “ As well, this applies to girls' chess. It is a variant of the “ Creating a Girls' Ghetto “ Argument # 2. The point is that women's titles

are “ cheap “. By that we mean that a title is being awarded in a separate women-only tournament, where the performance level would only be considered moderate, in comparison with a gender-neutral tournament. And the same is argued re girls’ tournaments.

It would seem that we are giving praise for “ mediocrity “, solely because the players are girls. Why, for example, should there be the title of Canadian Women’s Champion, if the woman holding it could barely qualify to get into the Canadian Closed Championship, with its low-rating cut-off, and she would have almost no chance of winning the Canadian Champion title ? Similarly, why would we praise a girl in the Girls’ CYCC by giving her an equivalent title to the winner of the CYCC – both are treated equally as age group Champions ? Should she not have played in the equivalent CYCC tournament, where the average rating of the tournament was much higher, and if she then won, the praise would be deserved ?

Again, this argument has much force. But is there such a thing as “ progressive praise “ ? Is it necessarily an all or nothing proposition for girls in the current chess world, where they still are a significant minority, and still lag behind the boys in terms of chess development ? One of the arguments FOR the Girls’ CYCC directly meets this argument, and we will examine it more closely when we deal with the “ Girls’ CYCC Arguments “ in future Issues.

The “ CYCC Only “ Arguments # 4 & # 5

In the next Issue # 5, we will look at these last 2 arguments in favour of abolishing the Girls’ CYCC. Then we will move into the arguments in favour of the current system, justifying (they maintain) the existence of the Girls’ CYCC.

October 2001 FIDE Rating List

There are still only 2 players over 2800 – Gary Kasparov, 13th FIDE World Champion, (# 1, at 2838 - Russia) and Vladimir Kramnik, 2000 BrainGamesNetwork World Champion (# 2, at 2809 - Russia).

There are then 12 players in the 2700’s, with Viswanathan Anand (India), 2000 FIDE World Champion, # 3 at 2770. Alexander Morozevich (Russia) is # 4 at 2742, and Peter Leko (Hungary) is # 5 at 2739. Alexi Shirov (Spain), 2000 FIDE WCC Runner-Up, is # 12 at 2706. Alexander Khalifman (Russia), 1999 FIDE World Champion, is # 13 at 2702. 12th FIDE World Champion, Anatoly Karpov (Russia) is # 16. Judit Polgar, the world’s strongest woman player, is # 19.

There are 3 young players we’ve been watching, who we call the “ terrible ’83’ers “. 2 are now 18 years of age, and the third will be at the end of the month. We predicted a three months ago that one of them would soon break into the top 20. Well, it’s now happened. Ruslan Ponomariov (Ukraine) is now # 20, at 2684. The other two are : Alexander Grischuk (Russia), 2000 FIDE WCC semi-finalist, # 27 at 2666; Etienne Bacrot (France), #36 at 2653. The # 100 rated player is 2595.

The highest FIDE rated Canadian is 2001 Canadian Champion, Alexandre Lesiege, at 2588, # 116 in the world.

FIDE World Chess Championship Time Control

FIDE has been at work again playing with new time controls. On Oct. 5, it was announced that the FIDE Presidential Board has decided the 2001 WCC will be played at whole game in 90 min., with 30 sec. increments from move 1.

This removes the concept of first time control. We fear it now sets the stage to start chipping away at the 90 minutes, and that it won't be long after the 2001 WCC that we'll see a further reduction in the time. This is all allegedly to make chess more media-friendly, since it is said television viewers will not watch long games. We don't think television viewers will watch chess at all unless they have a fair understanding of the game, and then they would watch long games if presented in an attractive and interesting format, with analysis, etc..

And as many have commented, the quality of top level chess can only deteriorate as the time control is shortened.

Where is FIDE eventually headed with this ? Will the federations eventually head off the FIDE Presidential Board on this one ?

SCC Fall (Tues.) Swiss '01

This 4 round, 6 player tournament concluded on October 9. The co-winners were Bryan LAMB, and Chris TAKOV, with 3/4 pts.

Following the variable Tuesday format we have developed, the next Tuesday tournament is our first members-only Active (30 min.) of this club year. It will be held on two consecutive Tuesdays, Oct. 16 & 23, with 3 rounds per evening. It will be rated by CFC in the normal way one-day Actives are rated.

NOTE :

A – Members/ non-members may contact Bob Armstrong, ed. , directly, or through SCC e-mail, to :

2. Be added to the e-mail list; 2. Submit content (fact, opinion, criticism - recommendations help!).

B – An item in any language may be submitted for publication, if accompanied by an English translation.

C – The opinions expressed here are those of the editor, and not necessarily those of the Scarborough CC.