

Report on the 86th FIDE Congress September 2015 Abu Dhabi, UAE

As FIDE delegate I have attended both the ECU and FIDE gatherings held respectively in Batumi last October and Abu Dhabi just over a month ago. My report on the ECU meeting has already been published but is appended for reference. I am pleased to note that since the report on Batumi was published, ECF Non Exec John Foley has been admitted to the ECU Chess in Schools Commission and is playing a leading role. Increased engagement from members in ECU and FIDE commissions was one of my stated objectives when I ran for the post and I am pleased there has been some progress. I would like to thank Stewart Reuben who raised a significant sum of money for the ECF, some of which he was able to put towards the costs of Alex Holowczak attending the meeting in Abu Dhabi. We have to be involved if we are to have any influence at all. Alex has produced an excellent and comprehensive report on the meetings he attended which I have appended. Stewart was also present in Abu Dhabi as was Alex McFarlane. Jana Bellin was present in her role as Chair of the Medical Commission where I understand she administered large doses of common sense.

The congress was in two parts; Commissions, which discuss matters such as changes to the rules, the award of titles, financial controls and internet chess, followed by Executive Board meetings. In theory, the commissions make recommendations to the Executive Board. As Alex Holowczak attended the commission meetings, I attended the meetings of the Executive Board. This was the first Congress after the presidential elections of 2014 which saw the re-election of Kirsan Ilyumzhinov. Because it is not an election year, the status of delegates in these meetings is that of observer although one can ask questions and get access to the reports and proposals as they are published.

Overall my impressions of the meeting were not positive, as opposed to the ECU meeting in Batumi.

Financial situation

The financial situation of FIDE weakened significantly in 2014. This was due to expenses exceeding the budgeted amount. The President's expenses were very high in an election year. Overall expenditure was € 3.5 million against a budgeted amount of € 2.6 million which suggests inadequate control. Legal costs were € 208,000 and the reason stated was the presence of FIDE's lawyers during the 2014 FIDE Congress in Tromsø.

Graham Boxall from Jersey, who heads the Verification Commission that is responsible for budget oversight made reference to the very high travel expenses and credit to him for doing so. He highlighted the large number of business class tickets purchased. He also pointedly asked Kirsan Ilyumzhinov for 'a few of those millions of dollars he promised at Tromsø' or something to that effect. My sense is that FIDE are relying on a big pay day when the next World Championship match takes place as there are hopes it will take place in the USA. The FIDE Reserve Fund fell from € 2 million to € 1.3 million, equivalent to just a few months expenditure at current levels. Michael Langer (Germany) resigned from the Verification Commission and has been replaced by Tshepo Sitale (Botswana).

World Championship Cycle

A title match in the USA would be excellent for the promotion of the game but it is entirely dependent on the success of AGON Ltd in finding a sponsor. The AGON CEO was expected in Abu Dhabi but did not show up. Members may be aware that Magnus Carlsen has made several successful trips to Silicon Valley and New York in recent years and FIDE are clearly hoping to capitalise on that. If this does not transpire I fear the organisation will need bailing out, or will seek to charge greatly increased prices for things like ratings, see below.

Ratings

This is an area that is of course of interest to members.

There were some worrying developments I would like to bring to members' attention. There was a proposal to rate some online games which I objected to. The Chairman of the Qualification Commission also objected but the FIDE hierarchy seem determined to force this through. There was a farcical exchange between the QC Chairman and the Executive Board Chairman Georgios Makropoulos. When the Chairman of the Qualification Commission pointed out that a majority of members of the Qualification Commission had voted against the proposal, Makropoulos replied: "well it wasn't a big majority". I fear this may be the beginning of a slippery slope and we should continue to raise objections.

For some reason, probably financial, FIDE want to transfer as many activities as they can to the FIDE Online Arena. This officially sanctioned playing zone has inadequate security and I direct members to this posting on the matter: <https://grahamcluley.com/2015/08/chess-fide-website-password/>

Towards the end of the Executive Board meeting a proposal from Mr Ilyumzhinov's right hand man Berik Balgabaev, appeared. This proposed to rate more games in the future such as games in parks. This would be done through FIDE's online platform. The information would come directly from tournament organisers (or perhaps even players themselves) and bypass the rating officers of the federations. There was significant opposition, not least because national rating officers are the guardians of data quality. It seems like a recipe for chaos, but Mr Balgabaev produced some dizzying financial projections that suggested the resulting rating fees will solve FIDE's financial problems.

Anti-cheating

There is some good work being done by Yuri Garrett of Italy and others, for example the recommendation on mobile phones last year, see: <http://en.chessbase.com/post/new-fide-anti-cheating-rules>. The Russian Federation suggested the mandatory adoption of wireless / telephone signal jammers but these are illegal in many jurisdictions. The Anti Cheating committee does not have commission status and it needs an increased budget as this is the biggest problem facing organised chess today.

Ethics Commission

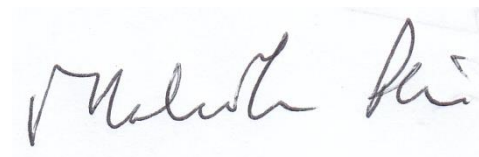
The Ethics Commission heard Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's complaint against Garry Kasparov and Ignatius Leong which notably was not backed by any federations. They found Kasparov and Leong guilty and rejected Kasparov's complaint against Ilyumzhinov. The published findings

made no reference to Kasparov's defence. At some point the Ethics Commission have to decide on a penalty. My feeling is that Kasparov will disengage now, which will at least save all parties some legal costs. The dispute between the current board of the ECU and the old board, for which see my Batumi report, has gone to the Court for Arbitration and Sport.

The Saviour of FIFA.

Towards the end of the meeting there was a surreal episode in which the President of the Russian Chess Federation proposed, in all seriousness, that Mr Ilyumzhinov should stand for the FIFA Presidency. I would understand entirely if members thought I was making this up but the proposal is here: tinyurl.com/p7yfshe

If FIDE were a paragon of virtue and the FIDE President a plausible candidate, this might have been a rather good publicity stunt. Instead it only potentially opened up the organisation to more ridicule. Thankfully it did not receive much traction in the mainstream media, although Mr Ilyumzhinov seems very keen on the idea and in his closing speech described FIFA as corrupt. He was subsequently photographed with Pele in London. See tinyurl.com/plgt8cq

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Malcolm Pein'.

Malcolm Pein

FIDE Delegate Report ECU Meeting Batumi 25/16 October 2014

I attended an emergency meeting of the European Chess Union in my capacity as ECF FIDE delegate. This took place at Batumi in Georgia over the weekend of 25/26 October and was hosted by the new ECU president, GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili. 40 of the 54 countries were represented, either present or by proxy.

The meeting was called to resolve some urgent matters arising from a change of leadership following the ECU election at Tromsø. Regrettably, some of these issues pertained to contracts signed by the previous administration and disputes arising from them as well as alleged misdeeds regarding the finances of a youth tournament held at Budva in Montenegro. This matter is now in the hands of the courts in Montenegro.

Matters arising most relevant to members:

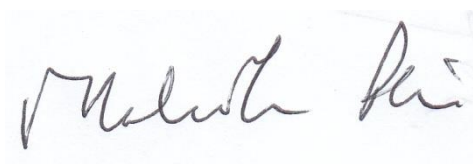
The president has secured 200,000 Euros of sponsorship for ECU from the Bank of Georgia. Commissions have been set up for events, education, arbiters and women and I would welcome interest from members who would be interested in serving on these commissions in future. Although all the places have been allocated there may be scope to add. ECF Non Executive Director John Foley was proposed for education.

A resolution with several recommendations to improve the governance of the organisation was passed. It was reassuring to see that the new administration had hired a lawyer who was present at the meeting and who will scrutinise all future contracts. The financial position of the organisation is healthy, which reflects well on the previous administration.

Two bids were received for next year's European Youth Championship; from Kusadasi in Turkey and Prague. Although the bid from Turkey was absolutely top class, the Czech bid was also good and I voted for it on the grounds that the costs of participation for parents to bear would be lower. I had the opportunity to visit the England squad who were playing in the European Youth Championship at Batumi and apprised the parents of my decision which was favourably received. I also managed to lose to one of the team at blitz!

Two chess matters were discussed:

- A) The possibility of cancelling the no draw rules at events which act as qualifiers for the FIDE World Cup. Currently, because the stakes are so high, many players find a way to draw if it is mutually beneficial.
- B) I was absolutely delighted that there was a significant body of opinion in favour of either amending or abolishing the catastrophically stupid zero tolerance rule. This is going to be considered further with recommendations to be made to FIDE.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Pein', written on a light-colored background.

Malcolm Pein

Report on 86th FIDE Congress, Abu Dhabi (2015)

Alex Holowczak

Technical Commission (TC)

This meeting was limited to 1 hour, and conducted relatively minor business.

The Commission is looking at recycling used chess equipment and how to improve equipment suitable for physically handicapped players.

There is a rival to DGT, "Chess Vision". They use cameras, 1m high, to record the moves of several games, and these are captured by a smartphone App, which is placed near the board. The App, when used, cannot enable access to other features of the phone.

FIDE's TC Chairman has advised Chess Vision that their software should be available for a maximum of 15% of the price of their rivals, i.e. DGT.

The company is fledgling, and major upgrades are intended: There were questions raised about how the system logged the end of the game, and there was no satisfactory answer. As of yet, the games are not broadcast live online. The system works over Bluetooth, rather than Wi-Fi. Another quote from the Chairman "Touching the screen of the phone closes down the transmission." This seems undesirable! The current software has a 5-minute delay by default, but this delay is customisable.

The Commission also covered tie-breaks. Hungary proposed a change to the tie-break rules used in the Olympiad, based on Buchholz. The Commission have rejected their idea as an improvement. The Commission suggested this idea instead, borrowed from volleyball:

If win	MP = Round GP up to nearest whole number
If draw	MP = GP = 2
If lose	MP = Round GP down to nearest whole number

It wasn't clear to me if this was an intended change to the tie-break regulations, or a change to the fundamental scoring system. I couldn't really understand the point of this. Geoffrey Borg claimed that he didn't like the idea of tie-breaks at all.

It was asked why this was TC business. The answer was that the Office forwarded the Hungarian proposal to the TC Chairman, rightly or wrongly.

The other area was an intention to increase awareness that Continental Championships, which are part of the FIDE World Championship cycle, must have the same regulations and tie-breaks. Apparently, this didn't happen.

Arbiters' Commission (AC)

This was also over within 2 hours, much shorter than expected.

The list of names submitted by David Sedgwick for category upgrades were not included on the paper for upgrades. Werner Stubenvoll said this was an accident, and that they had all been approved ready for GA final approval.

Earlier in the day, Alex, Stewart and I spoke with Sainbayar Tserendorj, who was aware that it may be possible to upgrade Lara Barnes to Category B. The problem of the incorrect FIDE-rating submission file was explained to him. He said that he would speak to Takis. (This happened before the meeting, and so there was no need to raise it during the meeting.)

(MP note – I was assured the upgrade was actioned and this matter has been dealt with satisfactorily – Congratulations to Lara)

The Welsh Chess Union proposal succeeded in lowering the age of NA from 17 to 16, but not in lowering FA from 21 to 18. The main opponents were from Canada and India. Ashot Vardepetyan was in favour of the principle, suggesting that NA should be 16, FA 21 and IA 26. I spoke and made the following points:

- I umpire cricket, which like many other sports in England, has no age restriction (or a lower age restriction, such as 12-14).
- In cricket in particular, people can be killed, as happened last year. I thought this trumped the Indian who preceded me, who said that a norm certificate might be signed incorrectly, or some prize money may be miscalculated. Yet there's no age requirement for umpires, who have far greater requirements for the safety of players that exist to a much lesser extent in chess (and who are, in any case, usually in a group).
- FIDE-ratings go down to 1000 now, and the standard is such that if countries are to FIDE-rate their Leagues with players of that standard, they need licenced arbiters to be arbiters at them. So the decisions would not affect strong players, but merely average/young players, and these provide an ideal training ground.

But to no avail. I was probably less articulate than I was here!

Casto Abundo proposed that a FIDE Lecturer should recommend the Assistant to become a Lecturer, rather than merely be an Assistant at a Seminar. The meeting approved this idea. The rationale become clear: He then spoke against a Filipino Lecturer candidate, who was his Assistant on one Seminar, and was not up to standard in his opinion.

A case from Durban where some arbiters (brothers from India) in the Under 10s ruled incorrectly on a draw-by-repetition case resulted in their disqualification for 9 months. It was more severe even than that: The Chief Arbiter, Gunther van den Bergh, reported in his paper that they did nothing and always referred Law matters on to other people. Their suspension was issued on the basis of dishonesty, rather than incompetence: They denied all knowledge of what was going on.

AC have introduced a magazine, Issue 1 of which was launched in July. It will be published twice per year. It is going to be similar in nature and content to the CAA equivalent. I have a hard copy with me.

The Commission did not have any copies of the 2014 FIDE Arbiters Manual with them. If a number of Manuals is requested from the FIDE Office, they will be dispatched. There will be a new version in 2016, for which comments are invited. The provided date was no more specific than that, except that they will be distributed at the Olympiad in Baku.

AC have been asked to find money to send arbiters overseas to act as arbiters in events by the Central Board of Commissions.

Kevin O'Connell wrote to the Rating Commission and AC about whether long-form algebraic notation was banned. It is not.

Klaus Deventer wanted the Anti-Cheating Guidelines to include a requirement for "players, organizers, arbiters, national federations and other interested parties" being "required to cooperate". Alex McFarlane noted habeas corpus, and the 5th Amendment, and commented that this may be illegal. The matter was not taken any further.

Oleg Korneev complained about the decision of an arbiter at a Rapidplay event in Germany. AC had received statements from both parties, and concluded the arbiter was right.

The Irish Chess Union applied for the FA Title for Peter Morriss. David Sedgwick was the lecturer when he passed the exam in Gatwick; the same course on which I passed. The wrangle here is that at an event in Ireland, there were three staff: Ted Jennings, Gerry Graham and Pete Morriss. Pat Fitzsimons, Chair of the Irish Chess Union, e-mailed AC to complain that in his final norm, Morriss was apparently not there on some occasions. Graham, when asked for comment, said that the norm was Jennings' work. All parties seemed to agree that this was true. Jennings argued that Morriss had several potential norms he could call on if this one were rejected, and the letter from Fitzsimons is a continuation of an incident between Morriss and Fitzsimons before Fitzsimons succeeded Morriss as ICU Chair. It wasn't clear to me what the decision was here: But it was odd that the ICU who submitted the title application, were then appealing their own title application.

It did not discuss David Sedgwick's paper in detail; most points having arisen earlier in the Agenda and been made at that point. There was no discussion about Wesley So. Casto Abundo had been tasked with improving the IT3 form.

Qualification Commission (QC)

None of the regulation changes were intending to be implemented before 2015.

The meeting was invited to go through the Title regulations and make suggestions, and several specific cases arose.

The Mitropa Cup, a team competition with 9 rounds, wanted to be a norm event, but due to having 5-player squads, wanted a norm to be achievable over 7 rounds. I pointed out the European Small Nations Championship might want to benefit from a similar blanket allowance of such tournaments. This was, in effect, extending the right already bestowed upon Continental Team Championships. The decision was that 7-game norms should continue to apply to the European Club Cup, but nothing else.

Regulation 1.41c was noted, which meant used the word “Bye” inaccurately; someone could request a bye in Round 9 and be eligible for an 8-game norm. The meeting clarified that this referred to wins by default due to an opponent non-appearance.

Now that it is possible for players to be stateless, and registered as FID, they will not count as foreigners for the purpose of title applications.

The Commission wanted to introduce a minimum rating for direct titles awarded where the player achieves 65% or 50% in the tournament in question. This was because so many tournaments were awarding these titles in Zonal events. As a consequence, the title would be awarded, and finalised once the player’s rating has reached 200 points below the rating normally required for the title.

The Commonwealth Championships would be “upgraded”, as far as direct titles are concerned, to the same level of direct titles that apply to the ASEAN Championships.

There was a proposal at Central Board of Commissions that from 2017, FIDE norm events must be paired using approved FIDE Software. The implication in England is that events such as the British Championships will finally have to pair their Championships using computer. It was originally thought that this would only be introduced in 2021.

Stewart was dissatisfied with the clarity of regulations regarding double round tournaments, in part because Stewart had noticed it given his desire to organise a double-round Swiss tournament. The Secretary mentioned that he thought Scheveningen tournaments were unfairly treated. As a result of this, the Commission will look to re-introduce other types of tournaments in a workable way for the purposes of norms.

There was a problem with a change that appeared out of the blue in the regulations, with good intentions but was not successful. 1.23 referred to a title being achieved at a Continental or Zonal Championship if 1/3 or 3 of the Federations, whichever is lower, take part in the event. Unfortunately, this had dumbed it down too much – it was originally 1/3 or 20. The meeting asked the African President, who was present, to choose an appropriate number, because Africa was often the biggest problem. He chose 5, and the meeting went with his recommendation, noting that it is likely to be increased further as years go by.

The amount of time required for a norm event without an increment will also be reduced from a 5-hour session to a 4-hour session, to bring it line with the permitted 4-hour incremental session.

The meeting moved on from titles to discuss ratings.

Jeff Sonas would be asked to investigate the Standardplay rating list, particularly with the new $k = 40$. No analysis at all had been done for Rapidplay and Blitz, because only now has there been enough data to do analysis. Thus, Sonas will now be asked to investigate.

Given the reduction to 5 games for a rating – which doesn’t apply to rapidplay and blitz! – the Commission are minded to remove the iteration process from rating of games played in All-Play-Alls.

Time limits for the rating of events was considered. France proposed allowing 2-hour games to be rated as high as possible. US representatives liked the idea of this, but suggested that a more gradual

approach to get there was desirable: Allowing 3-hour games, with 2-hour games for players rated up to 2200. The intention is to consult with Federations and players before making a change in time for 2017.

At present, games played in a match after the result of the match is settled are not rated unless permission is asked for. The default is going to change to all games in a match being rated, on the grounds that “dead” games are no longer even played.

Sebastien Feller had now become eligible to play again after his ban for cheating. There was much discussion about whether or not he should come in at his rating on the grounds that he was not playing some games, or have to get re-rated from scratch. It was determined that it was not QC business – the Ethics Commission will ask the Qualification Commission if it is decided that any of this is appropriate.

I spoke in favour of adjusting the number of moves for the first time period of a game from 40 to some other number, but Stewart Reuben and Nigel Freeman both spoke against. There were no other opinions.

There was an hour of discussion from a proposal from the Chairman of the Online Commission, which came out of the blue. There is no Standardplay rating list for games played online. The proposal was not very clearly expressed, but had already been made to the Executive Board. The idea was that, for a trial period, there should be an exception such that online games could be rated. It is important to distinguish between games played online on a server, and games played using the server as a conduit for making moves – imagine a telephone match, but the moves made by computer rather than by telephone. Most seemed supportive of the idea in principle, but didn’t want to commit to the Online Commission’s proposed speed of implementation. For example, there need to be a set of Online Laws of Chess written to sort out issues like touch move and illegal moves. There are obvious fears about cheating, which even with arbiters at each end of the matches, doesn’t guarantee there won’t be cheating. The meeting was against the speed of implantation, and so was a separate vote of QC members.

Fines would be introduced for rating files submitted 3 periods (i.e. months) later than the period for which they were registered. QC would be talking to the FIDE Treasurer about tournament fees, and this presumably means they will be increased. This notwithstanding, there may be a restructuring depending on the time of the tournament.

There were cases of a tournament being registered, and a rating file wasn’t submitted because of inter-Federation arguments about the rights and wrongs of whether the event was organised properly. QC’s policy is that the “Federation is always right”, and so will not rate the event. There was one dissenting view, but that was all.

QC informed the meeting of several areas of work that had moved to the Online Commission:

- Registration of Players
- Transfer Regulations
- Presentation of Rating Data on the Website (including hiding historic rating data behind a login screen)

The issue of Joe Redpath's FM title being awarded at the World Major Championship of 2004 ran out of time for discussion – the conclusion was that this should be left to QC to decide.

Rules Commission (RC)

The Rules Commission had a new Chairman and Secretary, Ashot Vardepetyan (ARM) and Sevan Merudian (USA). Stewart Rueben is a Councillor, and Alex McFarlane is a member.

The website is going to have a regularly published article about arbiting matters.

There are some changes to the way rule changes can be proposed:

- Proposals must be sent to the Commission at least 90 days before the meeting
- Final drafting of proposals must be sent to the Commission at least 45 days before the meeting

The Laws are being renumbered, such that they are numbered and not lettered.

They are considering making castling a Rook move, as well as a King move. I pointed out that given a player can move once a move is made, and not when the clock is pressed, you could have a situation where Rh1 – f1 is played by White, and black moves before White can move his King from e1 – g1. Seemed to be no suitable answer to that point.

Some Laws that were duplicated will be removed regarding draws by repetition/50 moves.

TC will be asked if clock manufacturers can produce clocks where should both flags be down, you can tell which flag was down first.

The Secretary wanted to change the number of moves you have to claim an illegal move. At the moment, if a player makes an illegal move on move 2, and his opponent claims it on move 102, you have to go back to move 2. The Secretary proposed a limit of 10 moves, as is the USCF rule, but just 2 moves in the “sudden death” phase of the game. I asked him what this meant in the context of a game with increments, where there is no sudden death: He answered that it meant the last time period. I asked the rationale for the different number of moves in this phase. The answer was that the player is unlikely to be recording his moves. I asked why G/120 and 40/100 + G/20 would be treated differently, given in both cases, a player would be short of time and not recording moves, yet one player could go back 10 moves rather than 2. This caused the “2 move” part of the idea to be dropped, and opinion was divided on the 10-move issue.

A clarification was provided: Electronic notation can be permitted at the discretion of the Organiser.

9.6(a) about “consecutive alternate moves” is badly drafted in 9.6.1. The Commission wanted to remove “consecutive” such that repetitions that were spaced out were disallowed. The Chairman of the Arbiters Commission said it was unreasonable to expect arbiters to see these things so far apart. I said that the original rationale was to stop players going backwards and forwards interminably, and that the Law's intention was reasonable but the drafting was poor. Stewart invited me to try a better wording, so I suppose I will have to do so at some point.

The new Chairman proposed a 2/1/0 points system rather than 1/½/0. This was overwhelmingly rejected. The main rationale seemed to be that he couldn't get Excel to show ½ on his computer, and it didn't fundamentally change the points system.

The Commission said that Electronic Cigarettes will be included in the definition of "smoking" explicitly in the next Laws of Chess.

A Councillor proposed a system of yellow cards to tell the player he has been warned by the arbiter. I spoke against this, citing the introduction of the cards originally was for a method of communicating between referees and spectators, and not referees and players. This received no support from the floor.

There was a proposal to remove Adjourments and Quickplay Laws from the Appendix, on the grounds that they should be encouraging Incremental time limits only. The RATING COMMISSION Chairman said that "there were no norm tournaments with quickplay finishes", which was wrong. I asked the QC Chairman, in attendance, whether games played with adjourments or quickplay finishes were eligible for FIDE-rating. He said that they were. I then said that this was a rationale for keeping them in the Laws. The meeting was divided on whether to keep adjourments in the Laws, but it decided to keep Quickplay Laws overwhelmingly.

The meeting then moved on to the proposals received from the floor.

A proposal was received to ban handshakes before a game. Jana Bellin, Medical Commission Chairman, spoke about this and gave the opinion it was too much. "No worse than using the London Underground". The proposal was rejected.

A question was asked about why you needed to stop the clock to claim a win on time in Rapidplay. I said that we had an appeal on a loss on time on that basis, and the Law should be changed: If the player doesn't stop the clock, then the arbiter will see it anyway, and he can award the loss on time whether or not it was first claimed by a player.

A proposal noted that you could run out of time but not lose if your opponent had a bare King, and asked why you should lose if you resign but your opponent had a bare King. I commented that this situation was so unlikely/unreasonable that it shouldn't be legislated for.

A proposal to score all draws 0-0, keeping 0 for a loss and 1 for a win, was overwhelmingly rejected.

A comment about the wording of the Quickplay Finishes was received, and the wording was not clear enough. It will be improved.

Online Laws of Chess need to be created, in order to allow the Online Arena to facilitate FIDE-rated standard play games to be played.

A question about whether the move counter should be on or off was asked. There was no conclusion to this, except that it depended on the standard of the tournament.

The meeting was not in favour of increasing the number of illegal moves to lose a game in rapid play from 1 to 2; instead, it preferred to reduce the number of illegal moves in standard play to be reduced from 2 to 1.

Anti-Cheating Committee

This was originally not going to be held, but it was for some reason. The first thing to note is the status as a “Committee”, not a “Commission” – this was due to the inquorate Tromso General Assembly, which couldn’t upgrade it.

The Commission explained their report. They harmonised the language in their regulations with the Court of Arbitration for Sport language. Their main aim is to be conservative in their actions and ensure their own guidance is legal.

They are not insisting on a transmission delay by a number of minutes, but they instead suggested the option of delaying by a number of moves, which creates less of an impact.

They had received questions about signal jammers, and they answered that they cannot use them in many western countries because they are illegal. Furthermore, if someone had a medical emergency, and they couldn’t call an ambulance, they would be in court if they themselves had introduced the signal jammer. They investigated whether or not the signal could be monitored, rather than prevented. The problem is that the amount of information required to transfer is just 10 bits, and this is too small to be detected.

The Chair spoke of the need for arbiters to end their traditional “falling asleep in the corner” role, and actually roam the playing area to check the movement of people around the playing area for cheating.

FIDE is considering introducing hand-held scanners to detect mobile phones being carried into the playing area.

There was advice for players when they suspect their opponent of cheating. If they say to an arbiter “I think my opponent is cheating”, then the arbiter should not investigate – they should follow the guidelines and fill in the form. By contrast, “Can you keep an eye on my board?” is an acceptable way to ask the arbiter. This is to help avoid the sort of “witch-hunt” in the case of the Women’s European Individual.

The Commission have investigated two cheating incidents, and are about to investigate the Mihaela Sandu incident in the Women’s European Individual.

Swiss Pairings Commission

I attended this meeting. Several detailed proposals were explained ad nauseam, and the highlights were:

- A new endorsement procedure was approved
- The application of Win-Swiss to be a FIDE Endorsed Pairing Program was postponed
- It was re-iterated that from 1st July, 2017, a FIDE Endorsed Pairing Program must be used for FIDE norm events. This only applies to individual events.

- A document outlining how different systems for accelerated pairings work was distributed. More discussion will follow in Baku.
- The difference between pairing in odd and even rounds is being removed. (It wasn't mentioned which the default was.)
- The last round rules on colour preference will be adjusted in a complicated way
- An "unplayed game" 0-point bye will count as a downfloat.
- "Unplayed game" 0-point byes will count as a downfloat, to avoid them getting a pairing-allocated bye in the two subsequent rounds.
- A proposal was passed such that half-point byes do not prevent subsequent full-point byes, due to the increased number of half-point byes on offer in some tournaments.

Alex Holowczak
ECF Director of Home Chess

