

Scarborough Community of Toronto
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“ FRIENDLY Chess Since 1960 ”

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO BOTH MEMBERS & NON-MEMBERS

Issue # 8 – December 15, 2001

Do You Know ? / Savez-Vous ?

Should the Girls' Canadian Youth Chess Championships Be Abolished ?? (Pt. 6)

Recap

The lead articles in the last five Issues have dealt with this question of whether the Girls' CYCC serves any valid purpose. Do girls-only tournaments help or hinder girl players? Currently, the CFC holds a mixed gender CYCC (“ Youth “ refers to 5 age categories : Under 18, 16, 14, 12 & 10 years of age); girls are entitled to enter this section, and if they win, to represent Canada at the FIDE World Youth CC. Alternatively they can enter the girls-only Girls' CYCC, and if they win, represent Canada at the FIDE Girls' WYCC.

To help us debate this matter, we proposed a fictitious CFC motion to the CFC Governors that next years' CFC Girls' CYCC be abolished, and that the Girls' WYCC representative be chosen from the CYCC, in which both boys and girls would play. This motion is no longer fictitious, since CFC Governor Peter McKillop has given notice he is bringing such a motion in the next GL. The issue of funding does not arise, since we have assumed CFC will continue to pay the airfare for both the WYCC rep. and the Girls' WYCC rep..

We have now examined the three leading arguments in favour of keeping the Girls' CYCC :

1 - “Current Tradition “ – FIDE uses the model of a mixed gender tournament, with a parallel women/girls-only tournament, so Canada should continue to do so.

2 – “ Clear Champions / Representatives ” – only an all-girls tournament can give clear results. In a mixed tournament, the swiss system is inaccurate for lower placings.

3 - “ Girls' Chess Promotion “ – a girl's-only tournament, given the under-representation of girls in chess, is superior for marketing the game to girls (compared to

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the normal mixed CYCC).

In this final article of the series, we shall look at the last two arguments in favour of the Girls' CYCC.

Girls' CYCC Argument # 4 – “ The ‘ Bridging ’ Function ”

With respect to girls, and this varies with age, and the current gender distribution in youth chess, there is a serious “ social issue “ that separate girls-only events meet.

For many younger girls, there is some uncomfortableness in going into an almost all-boys group in any situation, where there is little hesitation where the group has at least a significant minority of girls. And it is difficult for any “ learner “ of any age or gender to go into a group where other participants have already started to develop their skills. It is argued that this is an even more difficult situation for children, where embarrassment is a very devastating experience, and where there are seldom “ gracious winners “.

As well, one would hope that the social dynamics for a girl in such a group would be no different than those for boys. Unfortunately, there are still negative repercussions for girls in this situation. Many younger boys do have an “ attitude “ toward an “ interloper “ girl in their midst (this has been confirmed with teachers in both public and high school settings). So a girls-only setting is more attractive to many girls.

When boys and girls are coming into chess at the same time, and in the same numbers, perhaps these issues will disappear. But, for now, for many young girls, the separate girls-only events perform a “ bridging “ function. They learn their skills in a less intimidating setting. Yet, they get to play girls superior in strength, the same as they would in a CYCC tournament. They become exposed to competition and get confident in their ability. They are no longer a “ novice “.

They will then soon enter the gender-neutral CYCC, where before they may have been unwilling to start if the CYCC had been the only option.

It is true that there are girls, and always have been, who seem to easily handle entering into a boys' world as a minority of one. And they have been successful. But in all walks of life, not everyone is a leader, a groundbreaker (though, as a parent, we might be pleased to see such characteristics in our daughters). So, for now, the “ bridging “ function performed by the Girls' CYCC is an important and needed one.

And not all girls move at the same pace. So the Girls' CYCC provides flexibility; girls can “ bridge “ over to the CYCC at any age, when they feel comfortable doing so. The goal, with respect to young women, is to get them all to the right place, at the right time for them, with the tools they need to be successful.

There is a question as to the legitimacy of a girl who has played in the CYCC, then going back to play in the Girls' CYCC. Theoretically, a girl should not go back to “ place first “, in a weaker competition. She should understand her own playing strength, and that “ placing “ in the weaker event really doesn't add anything to her chess (and likely weakens it). But this is not to deny a girl a chance for international competition and representing Canada. These also are legitimate goals, and a girl might revert back to the Girls' CYCC to achieve them.

A second reason why a girl might revert back is if the neutral-gender tournament, with still a large majority being boys, becomes uncomfortable for her as a social

environment. Chess playing is to be fun and enjoyable, as well as competitive. The Girls' CYCC gives her a place to go, to play chess, and not give it up entirely.

Girls' CYCC Argument # 5 – “ Transitional Nature “

If the Girls' CYCC is successful in helping to draw more and more girls into chess, then it will become a victim of its own success. There may come a day, when we will no longer need separate girls-only chess. It will be a day when chess is “ cool “ (sorry for the elder generation word) in both boys' and girls' cultures; when girls perform at a level equal to the boys; where joint participation of boys and girls in the CYCC has become the norm. And when not only Judit Polgar, but many other women as well, break into the top thirty chess players in the world.

But that day is still a long way off.

The Postponed Girls' CYCC Argument # 6 –“ Inherent Selective Brain Inferiority “

There is an argument espoused by some, our current Canadian Women's Champion, Ms. Nava Starr, for one, who are satisfied that based on scientific research they have studied, women are inherently at a disadvantage in the game/sport of chess. This is based on studies claiming that there are different ways the male and female brains process information. One may be selectively stronger in some areas, but weaker in others. It is said that the spatial, and other characteristics of chess, place women at an inherent “ brain inferiority “, and that they will never, except by unusual exception, play chess at the very top level.

This is most controversial, and requires more extensive and detailed exposition than can be dealt with in this series of arguments. It will require a separate article, or series of articles, simply on this one argument. So we will leave it at this, simply baldly stated. If you have views or information on this argument, let us know! E-mail us your comments, or contact us for our address if you have material you'd like us to review.

Conclusion

This 6-part series has been the first time we covered such a controversial political chess issue by an in-depth examination. It is complex, and required a number of Issues to do justice to both sides of the argument, given the rather short length of our newsletter. We hope our series has been thought-provoking and enjoyable. It is not just an academic topic – the next CFC Governors' Letter is to contain a motion involving a proposal to abolish the Girls' CYCC. We hope our series will contribute to the debate to take place.

Thanks to our “ guest Governors “ who provided us with their own personal “ submissions on the motion to abolish “.

FIDE 2001 WCC Knockout Tournament – It's Ivanchuk and Ponomariov !!

Preliminaries

This tournament began Nov. 27 in Moscow, Russia. The first phase is now complete and the two finalists have been determined as stated above. Now there is a break, and then the final is an 8 game match, from Jan. 17 – 26, 2002. They are using the new time control of a game in 1 hour 30 min., with 30 sec. increments per move from move 1.

There were many upsets in the earlier rounds :

Round 1 : Anatoly Karpov, 12th FIDE World Champion (Russia), Nigel Short (England) and 70 year old Viktor Korchnoi (Switzerland) were eliminated.

Round 2 : Peter Leko (Hungary), and Judit Polgar, the world's strongest woman player (Hungary) went down to defeat.

Round 3 : Loek Van Wely (Netherlands), Evgeny Bareev (Russia) and Kiril Georgiev (Bulgaria) were ousted The latter was at the hands of one of the “ terrible ‘83'ers ” (18 year olds to watch), Ruslan Ponomariov (Ukraine) – in the last Olympics, he was just beaten out for the silver medal on board 2 by our own GM Kevin Spraggett.

Round 4 : Michael Adams, the # 2 seed (England) was eliminated by Peter Svidler (Russia). Ponomariov continued his charge by defeating Alexander Morozevich, the # 3 seed (Russia).

Round 5 : Ponomariov then upset the # 6 seed, Evgeny Bareev (Russia). Bareev was quite upset over one game, when Ponomariov had prearranged a “ Grandmaster Draw ” with him, but then advised him an hour before the start that he had changed his position and was going to play for a win. Svidler upset the # 7 seed, Boris Gelfan (Russia).

There was an expected win in the rematch of the FIDE 2000 finalists, Viswanathan Anand (India), FIDE 2000 World Champion, and Alexei Shirov (Spain) – won by Anand. The # 4 seed, Vassily Ivanchuk (Ukraine) expectedly won over Joel Lautier (France) to also enter the semi-finals.

Semi-Finals

This saw a major upset when Vassily Ivanchuk, defeated Anand, winning game four, the first three being drawn ! Another upset occurred in the other semi-final, as young Ponomariov defeated Svidler, winning game 3, the others being drawn. So it's an all-Ukraine World Championship final in January 2002 !

FIDE 2001 Women's WCC Knockout Tournament – Zhu Chen Wins !

Preliminaries

This championship is held in the same place and time as the WCC. The final was a 4 game match from Dec. 8 – 12.

As in the WCC, all of the top seeds fell in the preliminary rounds :

Round 2 : Wang Pin (China), # 4, lost.

Round 3 : the young 17 year old Russian star Alexandra Kosteniuk ousted the # 1 seed,

Alisa Galliamova (Russia); the # 3 seed, Ekaterina Kovaleskaya (Russia) also lost.

Round 4 : Kosteniuk defeated the # 5 seed, Xu Yuhua (China).

Round 5 : The # 2 seed, Maia Chiburdanidze (Georgia), lost to Zhu Chen (China)

The Finals

Kosteniuk took the lead at the start, winning Game 1. But then Zhu charged back with two consecutive wins. She only need to draw game four to win the championship, but Kosteniuk fought back to tie the score, and send the match into tie-break. On Dec.14, they split the first 2 games of the rapid tie-break 4-game match (rapid - 20 min./game, with 10 sec. increments). But 25 year old Zhu Chen then won the last 2 games to win the Women's World Championship, 3 : 1 on tie-break. She succeeds her country-woman, Xie Jun, the prior champion, who declined to play in this year's championship.

Botvinnik Memorial Tournament (the 2 K's)

This was a three-phase rematch of the 2000 BrainGamesNetwork World Championship contenders, Vladimir Kramnik, the World Champion, and Garry Kasparov, former World Champion, and the highest rated player in the world. It was held in Moscow, at the same time as the FIDE World Championship, from Nov. 30 – Dec. 9.

In the four-game classical match, the second game proved very exciting, though drawn. The other three were rather pedestrian draws. They split the \$ 250,000 prize fund.

In the 6-game rapid phase, Kasparov was leading going into game 6, and only needed a draw to win. But the Champion came back, with black, to win. This split the \$ 200,000 prize fund for this phase.

But Kasparov proved his dominance in the 10-game blitz (5 min./game) match, 6.5 : 3.5, winning 60 % of the \$ 50,000 prize fund.

Scarborough Christmas Active '01

This second tournament in the monthly 2001/2 Scarborough Active series was played Sun., Dec. 9. The winner was : Arnie Lucki, with 4.5 / 5 pts..

NOTE :

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