

FIDE WORLD CUP

Tromso, Norway, 11 August to 3 September 2013

REPORT OF CHIEF ARBITER

1. Introduction

Tromso, being the venue for the next Chess Olympiad in 2014, played host for the World Cup which is part of the bid package for an Olympiad. The Oslo-Tromso connecting flight is only 1 hour 50 minutes. The Playing Venue for the Olympiad has been identified and most hotels are within 5 minutes' walking distance from it.

2. General Organization

For the World Cup, the organizers used Scandic Hotel as the official hotel and playing venue. This is about 10 minutes' drive from the city centre where some players chose to live in. By Norwegian standard, the facilities and services provided at Scandic were somewhat below expectation. The restaurant menu had limited choices – while this seemed alright with the majority of players/accompanying persons, there were several players/officials who stayed longer if not for the entire event. On Sundays, we can expect service to be slower due to it being normally a rest day for most workers!

Nevertheless, for several of the organizers, this was their FIRST chess event and this was an experience which they gainfully understood. They realize that much work and manpower resource would be required for the Olympiad!

3. Technical Meeting

Most of the players attended the Technical Meeting which was held prior to the Opening Ceremony. Since most of the regulations had already been published in the players' contract, there was practically nothing to be discussed.

I reminded the players on the zero-tolerance rule and how it was to be implemented. I also emphasized that there will be electronic screening at the entrance to the playing hall and henceforth that players should arrive earlier to avoid a long queue. This was also to be considered for the Olympiad 2014.

The meeting ended within 20 minutes.

4. Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony was held at the Tromso University. The Chief Guest of Honour was Mr Jonas Stein, Commissioner of Business, Sports and Culture. It was a simple ceremony and the draw of colours was conducted with the top seed GM Levon Aronian having the White pieces in Game 1 of Round 1.

FIDE Treasurer Nigel Freeman delivered the FIDE speech.

5. Incidents

Only one player, GM Jorge Cori from Peru, was forfeited based on the zero-tolerance rule and this happened during the tiebreak games of Round 1. As an improvement, I would announce that the next game would start not earlier than a prescribed time. And a new count-down clock would be displayed. Cori made an appeal which was rejected but the Appeals Committee refunded him the deposit.

An incident happened in Round 2 in the game 1 between Wang Hao of China vs Aleksey Dreev of Russia. The match arbiter was Sainbayar Tserendorj of Mongolia. This being the last game still to finish, I went over to resolve a “misunderstanding”. Another arbiter, Amiram Kaplan from Israel, interrupted me and said that I was wrong and he tried to explain to Dreev in Russian language. At some point I stopped Kaplan. Dreev finally agreed to accept my decision.

While the team of arbiters (there were 4 of us then) were leaving the playing hall, Kaplan repeated to the others that I made a wrong decision. After putting my bag in my room and went to the restaurant, I saw him speaking to another arbiter, Ashot Vardapetian from Armenia, who was not in the playing hall at the time of the incident. Vardapetian then joined me in the restaurant and explained to me that Kaplan was seeking a clarification from him and when Kaplan did not agree, Kaplan claimed that Vardapetian did not understand the Laws of Chess. Most of us should know that Vardapetian is one of five active Councillors on the Rules & Tournament Regulations Commission! My Deputy Chief Arbiter Karl Johan Rist from Norway also joined us and agreed to my decision – he was there when the incident took place.

I reported the matter to Chairman of Appeals Committee and FIDE Deputy President Georgios Makropoulos who initiated that Kaplan be sacked. In Game 2 and the tiebreak matches, I assigned Kaplan to only collecting the scoresheets and that he shall have no right to supervise any game. He was among those arbiters who were assigned only for Round 1 and Round 2 and I had to admit that I did not wish to see him lose part of his stipend.

6. Results

Only one player, GM Ahmed Adly of Egypt, failed to turn up for the World Cup. The Round by Round results are appended in the Annexes.

7. Closing Ceremony

Once again, Mr Jonas Stein was the Chief Guest of Honour who also presented the awards to the two finalists. I represented FIDE.

8. Final Remarks

I wish to record my thanks to the local organizers; namely, Executive Director Borge Robertsen, Chief Operating Manager Ms Kjersti Vikor, Tournament Director Morten Sand and his Deputy Jan Sigmund Berglund. I also wish to thank Chief of the Press Centre GM Susan Polgar and her Deputy Paul Truong who gave much advice concerning the preparations of the playing hall.

Last but not least, to my team of arbiters: Rist, Vardapetian, Faik Gasanov of Azerbaijan, Husan Turdaliev of Uzbekistan, Sava Stoisavljevic of Serbia, Jesus Mena of Spain, Eduard Duchovny of USA and Tserendorj. Vardapetian was always ready to share his many experiences in several World Cups where

he was either Chief Arbiter or Arbiter. On several occasions, he selflessly reminded me on the procedures!

The other members of the Appeals Committee were FIDE Vice Presidents Boris Kutin of Slovenia and Ali Nihat Yazici of Turkey. Other than the incident of Cori, the Appeals Committee had no dispute to settle.

9. Recommendations

I was a Match Arbiter in the 2000 World Cup in Moscow for the early rounds. This was my first World Cup and a first FIDE knock-out event since then. I must admit that I did not do a perfect job. My opinion is that when appointing the Chief Arbiter for such similar events, the candidate must have been an Arbiter in at least one recent edition.

I later checked FIDE website on Kaplan's career record as an arbiter. I saw no reason why he should have been nominated for this assignment. FIDE needs to provide opportunities for more arbiters to perform in official FIDE events. Choosing someone with no or little experience outside his federation and is already 69 years cannot be a correct criteria. The appropriate authority would be the Arbiters Commission to make a list and the WCO pick from such a list. There should be different lists for different levels of competitions.

Ignatius LEONG
Chief Arbiter