

ICCF Services Director's Report to Congress, Albena 2017

Austin Lockwood WLS, ICCF Services Director, August 2017

Dear friends,

I am pleased to report another productive and successful year. Since the last time we met at Congress in Bremen, we have implemented a revised rating system and a completely new system for calculating title norms as agreed in Bremen.

Other than the server updates described elsewhere in this report, the focus of our efforts since last Congress has been the development of a unified system for withdrawing players from ICCF tournaments. The task of managing withdrawals has become increasingly complex over the years, and the Services Committee have been working closely with the World Tournament Director, the Rules Commission, and the Tournament Director's Committee to develop a seamless system for managing withdrawals across all ICCF events.

Unfortunately, we lost the services of Neil Limbert ENG as professional testing consultant in April; Neil decided to focus on his work within the English CC federation, and on behalf of the Services Committee, I thank him for his work and wish him the best of luck for the future. Neil's departure has presented quite a problem, as traditionally testing was always a bottle-neck in the process of developing and the release of some server features, including the withdrawal process described above, the Silli Tournament System, and the new Triple Block time control system, have been delayed at the time of writing.

Despite the loss of a professional testing service, I am very grateful to Thomas Biedermann USA, who has contributed many, many hours of his valuable time in a voluntary capacity to systematic testing work.

2016 Congress Proposals: Implementation Review

2016-002 Adjudicating Deceased Players' Games

The revised adjudication procedures were implemented in full on the server; adjudications where there are seven or fewer pieces on the board are now resolved automatically by the Convekta tablebase server and not assigned to a human adjudicator.

2016-004 Clarification of Tournament Rule 10.4c

It is now possible for the server to automatically recognise GM titles and add these to the pending titles list for checking by the Qualifications Commissioner.

2016-008 Applying Consistent Rules to Friendly Matches

Standard ICCF Rules are now enforced by the server for friendly matches.

2016-009 New Tournament Organizer (TO) Manual

Tournament organisers are now required to indicate on the server that they are familiar with the new TO Manual.

2016-010 National Federation Opt-Out of ICCF Adjudication System

It is now possible for the tournament organisers of national games to indicate that they wish to opt out of the ICCF adjudication system. Games in these events are not sent to ICCF adjudicators.

2016-011 GDP Based Fee Structure for Developing Nations

This proposal has not yet been implemented on the server for direct entries, the Finance Director and Direct Entry Commissioner currently adjust fees manually for qualified players. The proposal will be implemented in full for direct entries as part of general improvements to direct entry for Phase 15.

2016-015 Revised Norm Calculations and 2016-016 Minimum Opponent Rating for Norms

The proposed norm calculations were implemented in full for all title tournaments starting from 1st April 2017.

2016-017 Revised Rating Rules

The proposed new rating calculations were implemented in full, starting from the 2017/1 rating list.

2016-019 Revising Tournament Rule 10.10

It is still necessary for title awards to be checked and confirmed by the Qualifications Commissioner, there are no current plans for titles to be awarded automatically by the server, although this may be considered in the future.

2016-022 Evaluation of the Glicko Rating System

A separate report from the Ratings and Titles Working Group will be available to delegates, no server updates were required by this proposal.

2016-028 New Time Control System - Server-Based Games: Triple-Block System

The Triple Block Time Control System has been implemented on the test server and at the time of writing is still undergoing testing. It is anticipated that the system will be released in the Autumn of 2017.

2016-037 Identify ICCF Players by Name and ID Number Only

Gerhard Binder GER has painstakingly reviewed the server database, manually removing all instances of non-chess related titles, as required by this proposal.

2016-041 Chess Board at Disposal of Each Federation for Propagandistic Reasons

A separate report will be presented to Congress by the Player Experience Working Group; however, I am pleased to announce that a comprehensive series of help files for players has been written by Ambar Chatterjee IND and uploaded to the server by Gino Figlio PER; this information is now available to players.

Congress Proposals 2017

2017-004 When an Active Player Fails to File an Adjudication Claim

Estimated cost to implement on the server €300.

2017-005 Simplifying Adjudication/Cancellation Procedures

Estimated cost to implement on the server €600.

2017-006 One Team per Team Captain

Estimated cost to implement on the server €450.

2017-009 Credit Card Module or Alternative Payment System

It is impossible to estimate the cost of implementing this proposal without further technical details. The recommendation of the Services Committee is that initially an account with the proposed service provider should be opened by the Finance Director and payments taken “manually”. Should this trial be successful, technical integration with the server will be evaluated as part of the modernisation of the Direct Entry process.

Estimated cost to implement on the server initially zero, not possible to estimate future costs at this stage.

2017-012 Games in National Events to Count Towards the IA Title

Completed games in selected national events will increment the IA Games counter by one if the tournament complies strictly to ICCF rules.

Estimated cost to implement on the server €150.

2017-014 Establishment of ICCF World Zone

Some minor modifications to the server would be required, including the translations of zone names, the display on the Nations and Zones page, and the validation of zonal affiliation for Direct Entry.

Estimated cost to implement on the server €300.

2017-015 Eliminate 50-Move Rule when a 7-Piece Ending is Present

Estimated cost to implement on the server €600.

2017-018 Use of the Online Voting System Should Not be Compulsory

The online voting system was a partial success in Bremen, increasing participation, and reducing the number of proxy votes cast from 53.13% in Sydney and 42.55% in Cardiff to 5.76% in Bremen.

Unfortunately, there were some initial problems as two delegates failed to register their voting intentions. This of course was totally unacceptable, as the purpose of the system was the enfranchisement of federations unable to send a delegate to Congress, not the disenfranchisement of federations who are.

In response to this, we added some reporting so that the General Secretary could send *targeted and repeated* reminders to federation delegates who had failed to register their voting intentions; at the time of writing, all ICCF delegates attending Congress have registered their intentions to vote, and

the Services Committee are confident that there will be no repeat of the unfortunate situation in Bremen.

Making the online voting system “optional” is unnecessary, and there is a risk that it could pave the way to a return to the days of decisions being made behind closed doors by influential individuals and wealthy European federations, and be a step back from the enfranchisement of *all* ICCF member federations, not to mention laying to waste many hundreds of volunteer man hours and ICCF funds.

Estimated cost to implement on the server €600 to remove the default Option One and the due date for online voting, approximately €2,500 wasted on the previous implementation.

2017-019 Awarding Medals for CCE/CCM Titles

A link will be added to a player’s achievements page alongside the existing link to download certificates; this link will be available only to players holding the relevant title and will take the player to a special page on the supplier’s website, from where she or he can order a medal.

The link will also be available to national delegates, who will be able to order medals in larger quantities to offset shipping charges.

Please refer to the Qualifications Commissioner’s report for further details of this proposal which were not available when the proposal deadline closed.

Estimated cost to implement on the server €300.

2017-024 Count ICCF Free Matches to TD’s Qualification for IA Title

Completed games in free matches will increment the IA Games counter by one; validation will be added to ensure that free matches comply strictly to ICCF rules.

Estimated cost to implement on the server €300.

2017-026 Increase ICCF Governance of Member Organisations

The option to assign votes to proxy would be removed from the online voting system.

Estimated cost to implement on the server €375.

2017-027 Claims in Cases of Withdrawal

Estimated cost to implement on the server €1,200.

2017-028 Title System for Chess 960 to be Integrated into Regular Chess Events

Estimated cost to implement on the server €600.

2017-029 Alleviating the Draw Offer Rule

Estimated cost to implement on the server €300.

2017-030 To Extend Usage of Nalimov TB up to 7-man

The server currently refers to the Convekta Lomonosov server to evaluate tablebase claims and to resolve adjudications where there are up to seven pieces on the board. Whilst this service can

resolve seven-piece claims, it is unique – if and when the Lomonosov server fails (which it does occasionally) there are *no alternatives*.

We are currently working on fall-back procedures for managing six-piece claims when the Lomonosov server is unavailable (the claim is referred to the TD for manual resolution) and for tablebase adjudications of up to seven pieces (the adjudication reverts to the standard adjudication procedure).

However, no fall-back procedure is currently available for seven-piece tablebase claims; regrettably therefore, the Services Committee are unable to implement this proposal reliably, unless the rules explicitly consider the fact that the service may not be available in the future.

2017-031 Improve the Player Experience for Tournament Registration and Entry

In my report to Congress last year, several improvements to the direct entry and tournament registration system were listed and approved, for example the automatic integration of PayPal with tournament registrations, and the possibility of issuing tokens to players to use in lieu of payment.

As we moved forward with writing specifications for these improvements, it became clear that they were inextricably entwined, and that a unified approach was required to provide a consistent and modern service to players. We worked closely with tournament organisers and the Direct Entry Commissioner to produce a comprehensive solution. Unfortunately, however, we were unable to reach agreement on the final specification; we therefore decided to seek Congress approval of our proposed solution, rather than indiscriminately implement something against the wishes of one of the officials concerned.

The Services Committee asks delegates to **support** Congress proposal 2017-031, as much of the Phase 15 plan is already linked to this work.

The cost of implementation is distributed between Phase 14 items already approved by the 2015 and 2016 Congresses, and the miscellaneous Phase 15 items listed below (some of which have been carried forward from Phase 14).

Miscellaneous Priority One Tasks Not Linked to 2017 Congress Proposals

- A way to retrieve claims and analysis from adjudications in the case of an appeal
- Allow attachments (specifically cbv or pgn) with adjudication analysis submissions
- Globalization of Hall of Fame and translations of biographies
- Simplify translation process for system messages
- Globalize achievements tab on player details
- Additional player name with native characters
- Add "title" as a filter for mailings
- New features for country and zone details
- Improve promotion games design
- Include non-playing team captains when selecting "Header" as a mailing filter
- Recognition of player achievements
- Show result for finished promotion games

- Multi group international title tournaments
- Multi group events: Option for rolling/parallel events
- Multi group team events
- List TDs on multiple group events overview
- Multiple choices for Congress proposals
- Online voting comment tracking
- Online voting check
- Add "Proposals Closed" date to online voting system
- Replay a game even if it is your turn
- Improved game replay
- Display team captains to public
- Include player messages in Xfcc
- Option to always have White at the bottom of the board, even if you are playing as Black
- Improvements to rating diagram
- Historically correct rating lists with regard to deaths of players
- Following a substitution, the 40-day count should be reset
- Further security improvements
- Reports for QC (Excel or CSV downloadable)
- Events checked by QC
- ITTs: Require IA for every ITT where a GM norm is possible
- Historically correct certificates
- Make it possible to remove TD role without suspension
- Drawing screen for team tournaments
- Give the full name of the section in notification emails about games in multi group events
- Validation for PGN import
- Prevent players playing in multiple teams in a team event
- Silli system
- ICCF approved events
- Restrict possible tiebreak options for "strict" ICCF Rules
- Review data inconsistencies re titles, between achievements table and old rating lists.
- Facility to disable tablebase lookup
- Database performance work, including indexing etc.
- Remove team viewing rules option
- Change order of first and last name

Helpdesk Report

The Helpdesk report will this year be included in the Webmaster report; I am grateful to Gino Figlio for his tireless work in supporting this valuable triage service.

Budget

Given that there are some potentially high cost updates required, depending on the decisions of Congress, I ask delegates to approve a development budget for Phase 15 of €20,000.

The Services Committee asks delegates to **support** Congress proposal 2017-011

Some Interesting Statistics from the Server 1/8/16 to 31/7/17 (just for fun)

Number of players entering all tournaments: 5,185

- *Players entering ICCF tournaments: 4,081*
- *Players entering National tournaments: 2,978*
- *Players entering Zonal tournaments: 1,268*
- *Players entering Title tournaments: 2,169*
- *Players entering Postal tournaments: 404*
- *Players entering Chess960 tournaments: 185*
- *Players entering Email tournaments: 33*

Moves made: 4,602,557

Number of norms earned:

- *Number of GM norms: 28*
- *Number of SIM norms: 26*
- *Number of IM norms: 103*
- *Number of CCM/LGM norms: 463*
- *Number of CCE/LIM norms: 804*

And finally, a statistic that is only of interest because I make a personal appearance on the list!

Most norms held by an active non-titled player (5):

- *440615 ROU Becsenescu, Florin (CCE, CCM, 2 IM, SIM)*
- *10331 AUT Spiegel, Wilfried (CCE, CCM, 2 IM, SIM)*
- *211672 WLS Lockwood, Austin (CCE, CCM, 2 IM, SIM)*
- *240302 ITA Pecis, Gianfranco (CCE, CCM, 2 IM, SIM)*

Acknowledgements

Once again, I would like to extend my thanks to our professional consultant, Martin Bennedik. Working with volunteers is not easy for professional contractors such as Martin, we are invariably more chaotic, less reliable, and less structured than his professional clients. Martin, however, approaches his work with consummate professionalism and flexibility and provides ICCF with an exceptionally high-quality service.

Since last Congress, Mariusz Wojnar POL has decided to stand down as ICCF Qualifications Commissioner; Mariusz was the architect and motivating force behind the new title norms system and ICCF owes him a great deal of respect for bringing these procedures forward to the 21st Century. I am delighted that Mariusz has agreed to remain as a member of the ICCF Services Committee, and also offer a warm welcome to Uwe Staroske GER as Mariusz's replacement as Qualifications Commissioner.

I am particularly grateful to Tom Biedermann USA for many, many hours of systematic testing work following the departure of Neil Limbert.

Regrettably, my good friend Ian Pheby ENG has decided to stand down from his ex officio role on the Services Committee as Direct Entry Commissioner, should delegates decide to accept the proposal to enhance the player experience of entering tournaments. I would like to thank Ian personally for his many years of dedicated and tireless service; he would be very much missed by the Services Committee. Andrew Dearnley ENG has also stood down from the Services Committee, and I also thank him for his contribution over the years.

I am also grateful to all other active members of the ICCF Services Committee for freely giving their valuable time for the furtherance of correspondence chess.

A Personal Note

Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government (Thomas Jefferson).

With rights come responsibilities; and with the **right** to vote, comes the **responsibility** to be informed.

As an ICCF official and member of the ICCF Executive Board, I have no power to make decisions, my role is simply to carry out the wishes of Congress as best I can. I undertake my role willingly and take it seriously, because regardless of whether I personally agree with every decision made by the delegates of the federations that I serve, I am confident that these decisions are *informed* and have been taken *responsibly*.

Currently, delegates are required to indicate that they have read each proposal submitted to Congress and that they have discussed this with the players of their federation. To my mind this is the *absolute minimum* standard of **responsibility** which a serious international organisation should expect from its delegates before conferring the **right** to vote. Proposal 2017-018 seeks to lower that standard, by absolving delegates of their responsibility to be informed.

It is not for me to tell delegates how to vote on this proposal, however if the **responsibility** of delegates to make informed decisions is removed, delegates should seriously consider the implications for their **right** to expect the same level of respect, dedication, and commitment from ICCF officials that they were accustomed to before being absolved of this responsibility.

Rydym yn Ffrindiau – Amici Sumus

Austin Lockwood, Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau ICCF

Manceinion Lloegr, Awst 2017

Appendix I: Services Committee, 2018

Chair: Austin Lockwood WLS, Deputy Gino Figlio PER.

Ex Officio: Eric Ruch FRA (ICCF President), Michael Millstone USA (ICCF General Secretary), Gerhard Binder GER (ICCF Ratings Commissioner), Uwe Staroske GER (ICCF Qualifications Commissioner), Frank Geider FRA (ICCF World Tournament Director), Thomas Biedermann USA (ICCF Tournament Director's Committee Chair), Dennis Doren USA (ICCF Rules Commissioner), ICCF Direct Entry Commissioner.

Other: Mariusz Wojnar POL, Russell Sherwood WLS, Hermann Rösch PAN.

Other ICCF officers to be co-opted for consultation and acceptance testing when required.

Professional Consultation: Martin Bennedik GER