**REPORT OF THE RULES COMMISSIONER**

Dennis Doren, submitted on 3 July 2016

From August 2015 - June 2016

This report summarizes the activities of the Rules Commission between August 2015 and June 2016.

**The Commission Membership**

I was given the great privilege of working as the Rules Commissioner starting August 2015. My first task was the development of the membership of the Commission. These are the people who were selected and served this year as members of the Rules Commission:

IA SIM Thomas Biedermann, Deputy Rules Commissioner; SIM Gerhard Binder, Rating Commissioner; IA Jean-Christophe Chazalette; IA GM Sergey Grodzensky, National Delegate (RUS); IA Leo Lahdenm**ä**ki; IA IM Juan Alberto Martello; SIM Josef Mrkvicka, Auditor; SIM Nikolay Poleshchuk; SIM Kenneth Reinhart; IA SIM Uwe Staroske, National Delegate (GER); IA IM Ragnar Wikman, Appeals Committee (Playing Rules) Chair.

**TASKS: Accomplished**

There were five (5) main projects that were accomplished this year. Each is described below:

**Participated in the development of server upgrades**

While the main director over server upgrades was Services Director Austin Lockwood, I participated in what seemed like countless communications to facilitate the clarification of what rules, procedures, and parameters were to be included by Martin Bennedik in the various stages of server upgrades.

Some of these upgrades involved new procedures. For example, in very active coordination with Rating Commissioner Gerhard Binder, there was an upgrade from the original Document of Withdrawal to the new Withdrawal Wizard. This development included a new game status entitled "pending investigation" that serves to allow TDs time to determine if an ETL was due to a player withdrawal or was due simply to flawed time management.

Some of the upgrades involved procedures that have been mandated by the rules for years. For example, for a TD to record a postal game result now, the TD needs to input the game score which can then be archived. This change in automation was due to the fact that there were no postal games archived during 8/2014 - 7/2015 despite the rule that existing for years. Automation now requires that TDs fulfill this obligation in order to accomplish the basic task of recording a game result.

**Updated nearly all ICCF documents**

The Rules Commission spent 3.5 months (from mid-September to the end of December, 2015) reviewing 10 ICCF documents. This project, designed to involve all members of the Rules Commission, did more than just add or change specific entries stemming from Congress 2015 votes. It was also designed to find and fix conflicts in the rules - conflicts that resulted either from the rules newly approved by Congress or from older rules that were already contrary to one another. The Executive Board reviewed all of the changes recommended by the Rules Commission prior to those changes being officially incorporated into ICCF documents.

**Maintain ongoing list of proposed improvements and develop proposals accordingly**

During the first 2/3 of this year, I kept track of numerous ideas for potential improvements in how ICCF does its business. In April, I brought all of those ideas to the Rules Commission. The purpose was to facilitate the discussion of these ideas, and ultimately to determine by votes whether or not the Commission approved my promoting the ideas through Congress proposals.

A bit more than half the ideas were supported by the Commission. These were written up as nine (9) Congress proposals: 2016-002, -003, -005, -006, -007, -008, -019, -021a, and -021b.

**Chaired Work Group 2 (The Time Constraint Work Group)**

During Congress 2015, the decision was made to table 6 proposals and to have a new work group spend the year developing a time control system that would resolve/avoid numerous issues in the existing system. The ultimate work product for that work group was to be a proposal for Congress for that new system.

Work Group 2 was formed at the request of Eric Ruch, President. I was the Chair, with IA SIM Michael Millstone (General Secretary), Austin Lockwood (Services Director), SIM Gino Franco Figlio (Director, Zone 2), and GM Ron Langeveld (World Champion) as the rest of the members.

We worked for a substantial portion of the year, from October through May. That work involved a series of steps to accomplish the desired work product; from enumerating philosophical underpinnings, to assessing the relative values of a great many individual aspects under consideration, to assessing the relative ability of different proposed systems to accomplish our goals, to debating pros and cons concerning different methods for addressing specific issues, to testing a final set of ideas, etc. That final work product now stands as proposal 2016-028.

**Reviewing new proposals**

A new procedure this year is for the Rules Commissioner to review submitted Congress proposals prior to the date of online voting to ensure the following:

(a) that rules are quoted accurately and completely,

(b) that all proposed changes to text as part of a large set of changes are highlighted in the same way as are other proposed changes,

(c) that proposed language is clear,

(d) that any unspecified conflicts with other rules become specified.

The reason for this new procedure is to avoid what was often found last year - proposals were approved by Congress but were immediately in conflict with unmentioned existing rules, or were ambiguous in the language used, or the manner by which the rule was to be implement was not clear. Based on this year's review, there were only a couple of proposals for which clarification was requested.

**TASKS: Ongoing**

**Requests to EB for Rule Clarifications**

Last year's Congress approved a procedure by which rules could be clarified mid-year, if the issue was submitted by the ACO Chair or the Rules Commissioner to the Executive Board (EB) for the EB's determination. (See Outline of EB and MC Duties, section 6 for more details.) There were fourteen (14) occasions this past year during which such rule clarifications were required, requested, and obtained.

The following are the topic areas in which rule clarifications were requested from the EB. The date of each request is listed at the end of its description.

(1) Content of TR 10.10, in particular as pertained to a 60-day waiting period before titles were to be confirmed (but other aspects of TR 10.10 were also affected) versus 2015-003 (applications not needed for player titles of IM, SIM, LIM/CCE, LGM/CCM, and GM) - 14 November 2015

(2) Clarification of Arbiter Manual 2.4.3.3.c. & same wording in TDM-S and TDM-P section 8 (concerning exceptions for automatic adjudication draw claims by deceased players being from any of the listed exceptions versus what could have been read as needing all of the exceptions) - 15 November 2015

(3) Clarification of TDM-S and TDM-P 2.4 (concerning requirements to become an IA; that "completed games" includes cancelled games) - 15 November 2015

(4) Clarification of TDM-S and TDM-P 3.1 (concerning the rules allowing a TO to select a specific TD instead of one automatically selected by the server) - 15 November 2015

(5) Clarification of the proper way to codify Congress approved proposal 2015-004 (Revision of Playing Rules - Server) (because the quoted original rule to be changed was not quoted accurately, potentially confusing the Congress vote) - 12 December 2015

(6) Clarification of rule conflict concerning how adjudicators are to be selected (procedure differed between the automation of approved proposal 2015-018 and the prior requirement of the TO being involved) - 21 December 2015

(7) Clarification of the proper interpretation of accepted proposal 2015-012 (concerning specific time frames that were established within an online voting system) - 28 November & 22 December 2015

(8) Clarification of Tournament Rules 8.3 and 8.4 (concerning whether or not a withdrawal in one ICCF event automatically means a withdrawal from all ICCF events) - 24 February 2016

(9) Clarification of the interpretation of the phrase "ICCF-approved event" as specifically and only used within Tournament Rules 8.3 and 8.4 (concerning the application of the newly clarified "withdrawal in one event means withdrawal in all events) - 6 March 2016

(10) Clarification about which Appeals Committee should hear a certain appeal (pertaining to TDM-S 2.6.1) - 30 April 2016

(11) Clarification about how Tournament Rule 8.5 applies to friendly matches (the issue being whether the omission of the phrase "ICCF-approved event" from TR 8.5 meant that this rule applied to friendly matches) - 10 May 2016

(12) Clarification of TDM-S and TDM-P, section 8 Specific Procedure "f" (the issue being whether or not the 3-person panel review pertains to players with an accepted withdrawal due to serious illness/injury) - 1 June 2016

(13) Clarification of TR 1.3.1.(c) (the issue being whether the phrase "every Semi-Final group" referred only to every WCCC Semi-Final group or every Semi-Final group from every ICCF tournament, this being relevant to qualifying for the WCCC Candidates) - 20 June 2016

(14) Clarification of TR 1.3.1.(d) (the issue being whether the phrase "the ICCF World Cup Tournament" is meant to include the ICCF Veterans World Cup, this being relevant to qualifying for the WCCC Candidates; this clarification also affected 1.1.1.(e) and 1.2.1.(e) where the same phrase is used to describe a method for qualifying for the WCCC Preliminaries and the WCCC Semi-Finals, respectively) - 20 June 2016.

**Responding to rule inquiries**

A regular function of the Rules Commissioner this year was responding to inquiries concerning the ICCF rules. These inquiries were of multiple types: (a) asking what the rules were, (b) asking how to accomplish a desired end given known rules, (c) asking what went wrong (that is, why the server was not allowing something to happen), and (d) asking how a certain situation was to be handled. These inquiries came from ICCF Officials, TDs, NDs, TOs, Rules Commission members, and general players - in other words, all sources within ICCF. These inquiries were rather common.

**ISSUE OF PERIODIC CONCERN**

There was one issue that regularly caused discomfort while conducting business this year. That issue was the philosophy under which I, as Rules Commissioner, was told to function, and the conflict that philosophy posed compared to the philosophy stated/desired by other individuals within the ICCF. Early in my tenure as Rules Commissioner (on 12 November 2015), I asked Eric Ruch (President), Michael Millstone (General Secretary), and Frank Geider (World Tournament Director, who officially oversees the Rules Commissioner) whether "rules were rules" or were they "just guidelines". I was clearly informed that rules were rules. When implementing that philosophy during the year, however, I periodically ran into conflict with people espousing the philosophy that "flexibility" and "being human" were better and more appropriate than a rule-based approach. Because of the repetitive nature of this conflict, I posed my same inquiry to Eric a total of 4 times during the year, to be certain that I was implementing the desired philosophy. Each time, I received the same exact answer, one time with the added statement that Congress votes result in edicts, not suggestions. Still, I found it relatively common for some people:

(a) to argue the rules with me even after rules were quoted to them,

(b) to argue that I was wrong in my approach (that is, in treating rules as rules, as opposed to showing flexibility in interpretation and/or implementation), and

(c) on occasion, to refuse to conduct business in keeping with the rules.

I put this information into this report to document both the ICCF philosophy about rules and the role of the Rules Commissioner. In response to an inquiry or a problematic situation, my first task is to understand the facts concerning the situation, then to find and cite the relevant rules, and then to draw conclusions based on how those rules apply to the facts of the situation. This approach recognizes ICCF rules as the foundation for how decisions are made and problems are resolved. Congress, and everyone else can expect that I will function in that way until, if and when, I am instructed to work differently by the EB.

**FINAL COMMENT**

At this, the end of my first year as Rules Commissioner, I wish to thank Congress for giving me the honor and privilege of serving the ICCF in this role. It has been rewarding to know that my efforts serve the international correspondence chess community and this great organization. Thank you.

Dennis Doren, Rules Commissioner