

REPORT OF THE RULES DIRECTOR

IM Dennis Doren, submitted on 10 September 2026

Time Period Covered: August 2025 - August 2026

Membership of the ICCF Rules Committee

The following people served this year as members of the Rules Committee. There have been no changes in membership over the past four years.

(1) IA GM Thomas Biedermann, Entry Commissioner, Deputy Rules Director & Silver Bertl von Massow Medal;

(2) IA SIM Michael Roy Freeman, NZL National Delegate;

(3) IA IM Juan Alberto Martello, ARG National Delegate & Silver Bertl von Massow Medal;

(4) IA GM Josef Mrkvicka, CZE National Delegate, Honorary Member, & Gold Bertl von Massow Medal;

(5) CCM Arthur Simplina, PHI National Delegate & Isolated Player Support Officer;

(6) IA SIM Uwe Staroske, World Tournament Director, Manager of ICCF adjudication system & Silver Bertl von Massow Medal;

(7) IA Gian-Maria Tani, Title Tournament Commissioner, Hall of Fame, Lifetime Achievement, Honorary Member & Gold Bertl von Massow Medal;

(8) IA SIM Laurent Tinture, Games Archivist & Gold Bertl von Massow Medal

Ex-officio members: IA SIM Eric Ruch, President, & IA SIM Michael Millstone, General Secretary

Status of Regular Rules Director Duties

During this past year, I have addressed the following regular duties:

A. Updated all rules within the ICCF Rules based on Congress decisions or Executive Board rule clarifications. This update was submitted to and approved by the Executive Board.

B. Kept tournament directors (TDs) and tournament organizers (TOs) informed of rules and procedural developments. This was mostly accomplished through a mass mailing summarizing the rule changes from last year's Congress. Additionally, all changes from last year's Congress to ICCF Rules were listed at the beginning of the updated copy of ICCF Rules. Finally, I kept the TDC Chair aware of circumstances suggesting a need for TD training concerning ICCF rules or procedures when that became known to me.

- C. Responded to inquiries about rules and procedures from TDs, TOs, ICCF officials, and players. This was a frequent duty. When it seemed appropriate, I consulted with the Rules Committee about the inquiry before responding.
- D. Participated in offering input/answers to inquiries concerning server updates.
- E. Reviewed all new proposals for Congress 2026, both to ensure that any existing rule that would be affected by a proposal is mentioned in the proposal and to indicate if there appeared to be an error in how an existing rule was cited or interpreted, or a need for clarification of the intention of the proposal.
- F. No formal rule clarification involving the Executive Board was required this year.

This Year's Projects

Per usual, ideas suggested by others during the year or of my own were considered by the Rules Committee for potential Congress proposals.

Four (4) of those ideas received at least majority support and resulted in Congress proposals. This number is far lower than our usual range of 8-14. That change is thought to reflect two factors:

- (a) There were fewer rule changes (of a general nature) thought necessary by the Committee than were true in the past.
- (b) There were an additional seven (7) proposed major changes I brought to the Committee without taking votes concerning their support. These possible changes were instead brought directly to Congress for its review. The reason for this altered approach was because I believed it was important Congress consider all sides of these major issues rather than considering only a selected set filtered by the Rules Committee. These seven proposals were described differently to Congress for that reason.
- (c) I also brought one (1) proposal for a trial period for a new tiebreak system. This proposal was formulated with input from the system developer, from a main proponent of the system, and from the developer of the Prediction Criterion System. I also conducted two surveys as a test which served to underly this proposal. Based on these various sources of input, it did not seem appropriate to have the Rules Committee then review the request simply for a trial period.

For the record, here is a list of topics that were discussed this past year within the Rules Committee but did not receive majority support. In no special order, those topics were the following.

- (a) Should the process of not fulfilling a private (payment) agreement by one ICCF player to another ICCF player (for chess analyses conducted outside the ICCF, not involving any active games and conducted reportedly for training purposes) become a violation of ICCF code of conduct rules? The Committee concluded that despite the behavior not being okay, the issue was not seen as that which should fall within the ICCF code of conduct rules.

- (b) Should there be guidelines about the use of the messaging feature on the server cautioning against its use for marketing and personal gain? The Committee decided against the idea of legislating such things.
- (c) Should there be an option available to the ICCF Disciplinary Committee (DC), to be entitled "delayed suspension", that would postpone a deserved suspension until some future date or occurrence thought better by the DC? [When a delayed suspension would be imposed, the player would be allowed to continue playing active games but with two provisos: (1) the player would not be allowed to begin any new events (as defined by their official start dates) even if already registered and (2) the player would not be allowed to earn any new title norm from that moment on (as determined by the server showing the earned norm) but would be allowed to keep previously earned title norms unless the DC also imposes that penalty.] The Committee did not support this idea, stating instead that all suspensions should be enacted as soon as they are imposed.
- (d) Should there be a rule limiting the degree to which players from a sponsoring federation are rated below the remaining field in an invitational event, either individually and/or by their average rating? Numerous computational methods for determining such differences were considered. None were supported.
- (e) Should there be a rule (including as a code of conduct violation) limiting how long a player can keep a game going (in the attempt to win the game on time) in a triple block event without guaranteed time when the position is clearly drawn? The Committee did not support such a rule.

A Special Set of Investigations

Included in my duties is rule enforcement, both when someone's violation of rules seems clear to me and when a rule violation is reported by someone else. Typically, the subsequent investigations are completed readily, leading to a decision about the need for any subsequent action.

During Summer and Fall of 2025, I completed a set of very detailed investigations that were required as follow-up to last year's major investigation concerning fraudulent accounts. These latter investigations did not involve fraudulent accounts but were related to inappropriate conduct by multiple individuals from those times. All such investigations led to ICCF Disciplinary Committee referrals, with these referrals resulting in multiple year suspensions.

During this past year, I also investigated two alleged cases of mirror games and one unusual case of a player playing essentially all the same moves from the same side (black) in two different games where the variation played led to losses. The mirror games ultimately resulted in suspensions while the latter finding was not viewed as in violation of any rule (just a player's poor choice of opening variation).

Plans for the Upcoming Year

Two ICCF officials have generously volunteered to work on improving the utility and understandability of the ICCF Rules:

- (1) IA IM Mariusz Wojnar, National Delegate for Poland, has already started to conduct what promises to be a comprehensive audit of the Rules, as described below.
- (2) IA IM Valer Eugen Demian, National Delegate for Canada, will be drafting workflow diagrams to bring visual descriptions to the Rules to facilitate their being understood.

Both people brought the suggestions for their proposed work to me without being solicited for such purpose. Of course, they have my sincere thanks for the work contributions they have offered the ICCF!

The ICCF Rules Audit

Thank you to IA IM Mariusz Wojnar for the following description of his current and anticipated work.

“A systematic audit of the ICCF Rules and Appendices is currently being conducted by Mariusz Wojnar, National Delegate for Poland, in consultation with the Rules Director and ICCF President, with the aim of improving their consistency, clarity, accuracy and practical application. The review focuses on internal and cross-document references, ambiguities, procedural gaps, overlapping or conflicting provisions, allocation of responsibilities, unnecessary duplication, and consistency of terminology and structure.

The work already completed on Appendices 1–3 has provided a practical proof of concept, demonstrating that significant editorial, structural and cross-referencing improvements can be made without changing the substance of the regulations. The audit is intended to continue across the current regulatory framework, with the relevant decisions of Congress 2026 subsequently incorporated into the consolidated Rules.”

Final Comments

I thank the ICCF Congress for giving me the honor and privilege of serving the ICCF in the role of Rules Director. I am grateful to be in a position where my efforts serve the international correspondence chess community and this great organization. Thank you for this opportunity.

IM Dennis Doren, Rules Director