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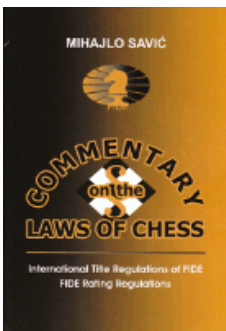
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## COLUMNISTS

### From the Archives



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## An Arbiter's Notebook by Geurt Gijssen

### Events in Elista

I was very honored when I received a fax with the message that I had been appointed as Chief Arbiter of the XXXIII Chess Olympiad in Elista. In 1996 I was the Chief Arbiter of the match for the World Chess Championship between Anatoly Karpov and Gata Kamsky, also played in Elista, and I had only good memories about Elista and Kalmykia. The co-operation between the organizers and me was excellent and when I saw that the same people would be organizing the Olympiad, I was a happy man. Looking back on the Olympiad, I am still a happy man. The organizers were nice persons; the Kalmykians are very simpatico and co-operative and considered every foreigner as a friend. In this Notebook I would like to tell you something about this very remarkable Olympiad.

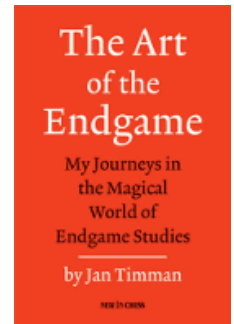
Immediately after a tournament in France, the Cancan tournament between Veterans and Ladies, I flew to Moscow. In Moscow, on September 22, Mr. Makropoulos called me. He told me that the first round probably would have to be postponed for two days, because the Chess Palace in Chess City was not ready. We discussed some options and we agreed to cut one round and one rest day. This meant, instead of fourteen rounds, we would play thirteen rounds.

On September 23 I arrived in Elista and I went immediately to Chess City. When I saw the building I felt desperate. It was, in my opinion, absolutely impossible to start on September 29, although everybody assured me that we would start on the 29th, instead of 27th. From this moment I visited Chess City very frequently to inspect and track the progress. In the meantime many teams arrived and went to their apartments and cottages in Chess City. The players also had their doubts about whether or not we would start on time. By the way, the players were not briefed about the postponement of the first round. They were walking around the Chess Palace wondering when it might start.

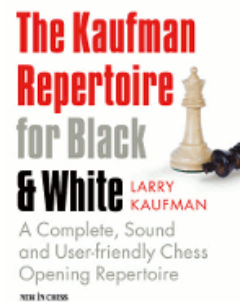
Looking back, I can say that it was quite funny that the Kalmykian organizers were so sure that we would start on the 29th in the Chess Palace, but the non-Kalmykian organizers started to make an emergency scenario in case the building was not ready. I myself went to the Youth Palace, in which in 1996 the match Karpov-Kamsky had been played and calculated how many matches could be played in this building. Mr. Gelfer checked the number of matches that could be played in the living rooms (and not the kitchens, like some journalists reported) of the cottages. The final result of our calculations was that we could start the Olympiad in this way on September 29.

The opening ceremony was scheduled for September 26, at 7.00 p.m. During this ceremony, I informed the captains that on September 27, at 3.00 p.m., there would be a captains' meeting in the Youth Palace. The opening ceremony was really splendid.

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At the captains' meeting almost all captains were present. Mr. Makropoulos, Deputy President of FIDE, explained the reason why the first round had to be postponed for two days. Due to the monetary crisis in Russia, which had commenced August 17, it was impossible to withdraw money from banks to pay the people who were working in Chess City. The organizers had lost three weeks and he asked the captains for their patience. I explained the alternatives and I must admit how surprised I was with the support we got from the captains. The alternative playing venues were not a problem at all, thirteen rounds instead of fourteen rounds were accepted and one rest day less was also agreed.

Another item in this meeting was Yom Kippur, a Jewish holy day. Back in Bled, during the meeting of the FIDE Central Committee it had been decided that the Israeli teams would be allowed to play on September 29, from 10.00 until 18.00 and on September 30 from 18.00. It was also decided that I should announce this at the captains meeting before the start of the Olympiad. There were no objections. The captains were very co-operative. In my opinion, we had gotten off to a good start...

The Olympiad started in fact on September 29 at 10 a.m. in the Youth Palace with the matches Israel B-Venezuela in the men's competition and Azerbaijan B-Israel in the women's competition. The night before I had to inform the captains of these teams that they had to play the next morning instead of in the afternoon. The Venezuelan team was attending a party at the time and it was very difficult to find them. However, after the start of these two matches I went immediately to Chess City to see whether it was ready for play or not.

There, it was as if I were witnessing a miracle. We certainly could play in the Chess Palace! Floor after floor had been finished by the contractors and it was amazing and inspiring to see how hard people were working to finish their job on time. None of the organizers and the staff went to sleep that night. Ben Bulsink, an employer of DGT, who was responsible for the computer boards and the electronic clocks, worked for thirty-five hours to install them. Eric Van der Schilden and his staff from the TASC Company started to install the network. So, at 15.15 we started the first round in the Chess Palace.

At first, it turned out to be impossible to use the electronic system, although a very well trained team managed to put all the games into the computer. But, from Round Three the whole system worked perfectly. This meant we could follow all games in the computer room on the fourth floor and if something irregular happened, it would be discovered immediately. The rounds finished about 10.00 p.m. and at 11.00 p.m. the file with all 328 games could be sent to the bulletin editor.

As in the World Championship Tournament in Groningen and Lausanne, the time limit was 40 moves in 1 hour and 40 minutes, then 20 moves in 50 minutes and 10 minutes for the remaining moves, with the addition of 30 seconds after each move – the so called Fischer modus. Generally there were not many problems, but even so there were a few incidents worthy of mention. During the tournament it was discovered that the clock would not function properly if it had been installed in a peculiar way. It occasionally happened that the clock was not programmed correctly by the arbiter. Fortunately it was quite easy to correct. The big advantage was that claims based on Article 10 of the Laws of Chess were eliminated.

The games were played on four floors. On the fourth floor the matches 1-6 of the women's competition were played, on the third floor the matches 7-36 of the women's competition, on the second floor matches 1-42 of men's competition, while the balance of the men's teams, boards 43-55, took place on the first floor. In addition, the top matches in the men's competition were played in a separate room on the second floor.

It was not so easy to supervise all floors. From the first to the fourth floor there were seventy-two steps. Trust me on this. My room was on the fourth floor. The readers will understand that I lost several kilos, although I had no time for jogging.

In the building there were two main problems. First of all, as in all Olympiads, it was very noisy. In all the halls and rooms, except where the top matches of the women and men were played, there was a lot of noise, mainly produced by reserve players, captains and players who had finished their games. In the rooms of the top matches it was quiet, but very warm. I had to make a choice and this was in my modest opinion the best solution. I tried also to reduce the people who had access to the top matches. Policemen, translators and some arbiters had a hard job, but ultimately they survived. The decision to close the central staircase was a very good one.

In the sixth round the match USA-Georgia was scheduled. At 5.55 p.m. the U. S. captain Larry Christiansen came to me and informed me that Gulko would not press his clock after 6.30 for religious reasons. Gulko in fact was ready to give his opponent, Sturua, some compensation. I went to the Georgian captain, Mrs. Gurieli, and informed her. She was surprised and went to the first board player of the Georgians, Azmaiparashvili. His first reaction was to agree draws on all boards, but then he requested five minutes for deliberation. After these five minutes the Georgians agreed that a boy could press Gulko's clock with the proviso that Sturua should get two extra minutes. I agreed and the game continued.

In the next round Ukraine was the opponent of the USA. This time Larry informed me that Gulko could not press his clock until after 6.15 o'clock. Gulko agreed to play, while his time was reduced with ten minutes and ten minutes should be added to his opponent's time. Onischuk was his opponent. I went to the Ukrainian delegation and Onischuk agreed immediately to play under normal conditions: no compensation or reduction of time.

In the eleventh round England was America's opponent. David Norwood, the English captain, came to me and informed me that the English team had refused the request to allow someone else to press Gulko's clock. I informed Larry Christiansen and told him that I accepted the position of the English team. I did point out to Christiansen, however, that he could take an appeal and he was ready to do so. In the meantime I informed the chairman of the Appeals Committee, Mr. Campomanes, who was in an Asian continent meeting, that he could expect an appeal. He asked me what was going on and then gave his opinion that the Americans had no chance and might even have to pay a fine. When I mentioned this to Larry, he decided to take a path of lesser resistance and replace Gulko.

I can imagine that a reader might refer to the last paragraph of Article 8.1 and the Preface of the Laws of Chess:

*If a player due to physical or religious reasons, is unable to keep score, an amount of time, decided by the arbiter, shall be deducted from his allotted time at the beginning of the game.*

When cases are not precisely regulated by an Article of the Laws of Chess, it should be possible to reach a correct decision by studying analogous situations which are discussed in the Laws. I thought it over. And my conclusion was that pressing the clock (especially in the Fischer modus) is an essential part of the game itself. Writing the moves is not essential and can even be done from a reasonable distance. The person designated to press the clock always sits next to the player and in front of the opponent. This can be disturbing. Of course, if an opponent agrees under such circumstances, I have no objection.

During the Olympiad there was also the FIDE congress and three meetings of the Rules Committee. More about these meetings next month...

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This article first appeared at [ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com) in October 1998.

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