

RINGING OUT THE OLD, RINGING IN THE NEW

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Six years ago in Toronto, Ben Mittman became the first President of a brand-new organization dedicated to promotion activities in computer chess. The success of the organization rested in his hands and I am happy to report that, six years later, the ICCA is on a good course and Ben leaves office with many important accomplishments to his credit.

First and foremost has been the success of the ICCA Newsletter. Ben struggled to gather appropriate stories and reports for publication. Gradually material improved. We now have the ICCA Journal and articles of outstanding quality have been published and will continue to be published for many years to come. Our first issue featured Mikhail Moiseevich Botvinnik's perspective of the future, an article certain to be a classic.

Ben has successfully kept the ICCA an organization "of the programmers". The ICCA was established to promote computer chess and the exchange of ideas about how computers should play. Ben has helped the ICCA avoid becoming involved with peripheral issues. In the United States, for example, the USCF Computer Chess Committee has invested an inordinate amount of energy into the problem of rating commercial programs when they might better have eased the rules for computers to play in human tournaments to obtain the ratings in the first place.

During the last six years, we have all seen interest in computer chess grow and the sanctioning of major tournaments has become an important part of the ICCA's activities. Ben has developed sanctioning criteria which assure us that the tournaments will be run fairly and, first and foremost, for the benefit of the participants. The success of the most recent World Microcomputer-Chess Championship in Budapest confirms the correctness of his policies.

Our recognition by FIDE as the organization for computer chess is extremely important for the long-term success of our organization. Ben has established the groundwork for greater co-operation with FIDE in the years to come.

Ben's interest in computer chess dates at least to the days when, as director of the Vogelback Computer Centre at Northwestern University, he supported the young bunch of Northwestern University students, David Slate, Larry Atkin, and Keith Gorlen, developed a chess program that was to dominate all others for the 1970's. In 1970, the Slate, Atkin and Gorlen program won the ACM's First United States Computer-Chess Championship and that inspired Ben to organize the second championship the following year in Chicago. Since then he has been involved in the organization of all the ACM tournaments and the four world championships.

He has written widely on the subject; his best-known effort is a contribution to Peter Frey's Chess Skill in Man and Machine. Articles of his have also appeared in the ICCA Newsletter, the Communications of the ACM, SIGART Newsletter, and Datamation.

Ken Thompson is leaving his position as Secretary after serving a three years term. His major contribution to the field, of course, has been BELLE and the success of the ICCA has been closely tied to the success of BELLE. Ken's interest, enthusiasm and success have been an inspiration to all of us involved in computer chess. As an officer in the organization Ken has developed text-processing capabilities that give us perfect printouts from major tournaments almost instantaneously. He was in charge of the Selections Committee for the most recent world championship and he has led the way in the United States to get computers involved in human tournaments. His recent success at the United States Open in Pasadena, where BELLE scored 8½/12 wrought a new rung on the ladder towards a world champion chess program.

The new officers of the ICCA, along with Jaap van den Herik, met in New York at the World Championship on the morning following their election to discuss future issues. At that time (reporting hence forward as elected officers), we made two relatively easy decisions:

- (1) We agreed to sanction a 4th World Microcomputer-Chess Championship in Scotland in September 1984, providing the Scottish proposers would come forward with a satisfactory formal proposal shortly.
- (2) We agreed to sanction a major tournament, either a 5th World Microcomputer-Chess Championship or a "World Invitational" in Amsterdam in 1985 pending, again, receipt of a formal proposal. A request to hold the 5th World Championship in Amsterdam in 1985 was turned down because we felt the three-year interval for championships should be maintained.

We are seeking proposals for a 5th World Championship some time in 1986, preferably in the summer and preferably in Europe. The tournament has seen-sawed across the Atlantic since first being held in Stockholm in 1974, which makes a European location due for 1986. There is no obligation, however, to persist in this pattern in the face of any proposal so attractive that turning it down would be unwise.

Over the next year or so, I, as President, hope we are able to develop several classes of membership. In some countries, individuals are normally affiliated to their national organizations, which latter, in turn, are affiliates of an international organization. Yet, it should be individuals who enter tournaments, possibly under the aegis of a national co-ordinating committee, which, however, should not have the final say-so in the choice of their national participants. We hope that national organizations will fit their structure to be co-operative in rather than adversary to such an arrangement.

I will close by thanking you for the opportunity and honor to lead and serve this organization and I hope I do as well as Ben has done.

(This is a slightly edited version of Professor Newborn's address on the occasion of the election of the ICCA's officers, New York, NY, October 24, 1983.)