

CORRESPONDENCE

'Twixt Cup and lip ...'

From *C. Chabris and D. Edelman*¹.

To the Editor,

On p. 165 of *ICCA Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 3, ICCA President Tony Marsland reported on "An informal meeting of ICCA members" held on 27 June, 1994 in Cape May, NJ. After listing several European computer-chess events, he wrote: "The President found that similar events did not occur in America quite as frequently, though there is the Harvard Cup (a poor cousin of AEGON and perhaps trying too hard to ensure some good results against "tired" humans) ..."

Of all the events mentioned in the relevant paragraph, the Harvard Cup is the only one singled out for comparison and innuendo in a "finding" by the ICCA President. Why is this? As the founders and organizers of the Harvard Cup series, we appreciate our tournament being mentioned in the company of other fine events such as AEGON, but we object to its characterization as a "poor cousin" and we deny the insinuation that it is organized explicitly or implicitly to favour the computer participants. The Harvard Cup was inaugurated in 1989 by Garry Kasparov and has just completed a successful fifth edition (see the report elsewhere this issue), and since its inception has been the only regular tournament in the world pitting exclusively human grandmasters against chess-playing computers. More importantly, though, the ICCA President offers no justification whatsoever for his grave accusation regarding the ethics of the Harvard Cup. We respectfully request a retraction and apology.

We strongly believe that the ICCA (through its officers and publications) should not publicly defame events such as the Harvard Cup that clearly benefit the international computer-chess community. After all, in the same article (p. 166) the author urges the ICCA "to seek more opportunities for computers and humans to match wits". Do unsupported criticisms and allegations about a respected event of just this sort help the cause?

... Cape May be a slip

From *T.A. Marsland*², ICCA President.

Dear Mr. Chabris and Mr. Edelman,

Thank you for your recent letter concerning my ICCA Information-Meeting report from Cape May. Upon re-reading that report I can see why you are aggrieved, since it does indeed look as though I actually made the remarks that you find offensive. At this time, I would like to assure you that this was not the case, rather the words reflect my way of summarizing input received from participants at the meeting.

In my presentation I lamented that there were relatively fewer computer-chess competitions in North America than in Europe, citing the Harvard Cup as one of the few alternatives. This led to some general discussion which I summarized in those few unfortunate words. It certainly was not clear that I was not speaking from first-hand experience. [Indeed I have had neither the time nor the money to attend either an AEGON or a Harvard Cup event.] However, there were others present who *could* speak with authority, perhaps even as participants!

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At the time I wrote the report I believed that my words adequately summarized the discussion. Even so, I hasten to add that, to my recollection, there were no denigrating or personal remarks made about you. No doubt over the years the organization and conditions of your event have changed, so perhaps the criticisms I heard are no longer valid.

May I leave it to you in your next Harvard Cup report to address these issues and correct any poor impression that you feel my article may have given the ICCA readership? As President of the ICCA it is my role to stimulate interest in computer chess. It is certainly not my plan or intent to undermine any human-computer events. With this in mind I should perhaps have chosen my words more carefully.

Intuition – is it there?

From *Professor A.D. de Groot*¹.

Dear Editors,

Why do the Editors of the *ICCA Journal* – intelligent persons, I presume – persevere in misrepresenting the intuition issue and stick to the strategy: Construct a strawman, then shoot? I quote Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 114: "By those holding that intuition is at the bottom and indeed, at the very unique rock bottom of all chess, computer-played games have been ridiculed as mere mechanical mock-ups, infinitely remote from human chess by human masters". Name me one living person who "holds that intuition (...) is at the very unique rock bottom"(sic) "of all chess"(sic) – nonsense even if the word "all" would be replaced by "human" – and who, at that, goes on "ridiculing computer-played games"?

Then: "The defensibility of these intuitionist views has now been challenged and – in your Editors' opinion – is on the verge of being falsified. None less than Kasparov has experienced a discomfiture: as the pace quickens the Championship fades".

First, "intuitionism", L.E.J. Brouwer's philosophical conception of the foundations of mathematics, is not at issue here. Second, conceptions of "intuition" as described in the preceding sentence do not exist. A variant: "By those holding that the athlete's physiology is at the bottom and, indeed, at the very unique rock bottom of all human racing, automobile racing contests have been ridiculed as mere mechanical mock-ups (...)." "Now the defensibility of physiologist views (...) is on the verge of being falsified." Hurray!

I think I have spoken for many others, when I said on the future of *hardware breakthroughs* – which I underrated, conceded (*ICCA Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1987, p. 74): "If I am wrong I feel slain by brute force but not really unhappy". Do the Editors really feel that the calculating speed of computers and humans are more comparable than are racing speeds of cars and humans? And would it be possible to stop this strawman technique? Intuition as a basic *human* capability happens to be one of my favourite topics. About the idea and the word enough nonsense has been said in the past.

In tuition – hi-fi and high fee?

From *H.J. van den Herik and I.S. Herschberg*.

Dear Professor De Groot,

We take the unexpected opportunity of receiving your letter to congratulate you on your eightieth birthday.

For a start, we do not feel that apologies are in order for our provocative Editorial. It is a legitimate function for Editors to challenge their readership, even unto the limits of deadly seriousness. Indeed, probing the very borders of a subject is of the essence of all science.

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