

I find it interesting to note that the *ICCA Journal* has published many articles whose main theme is not computer chess, but relate to general aspects of game playing, especially heuristic searching methods. I think the *ICCA Journal* should acknowledge in its aims and scope that there are various problems relating to heuristic game playing that can be addressed through strategic games other than Chess. I will briefly list some such games and problems.

The game of Go is an example where the 'brute-force' method, which has been so successful in Chess, does not seem to work. Making progress in artificial Go demands heuristic searching techniques that are much more selective than current methods and a much better understanding of how to encode knowledge, which may be local to independent parts of the game tree. The game of Bridge is an example of a game with imperfect information, as opposed to Chess in which the information is perfect. Again, new heuristic search methods need to be developed and explored to take into account the numerous eventualities. The game of Backgammon is an example of a game with chance moves, as opposed to Chess which has no chance element. Although strong programs have recently been developed using temporal differencing techniques, there is still the open problem of developing novel search methods for such games. Finally, Diplomacy is an example of a game with N players, where N is greater than two, as opposed to Chess where there are only two players. Such games pose a variety of new challenges such as modelling the negotiation between players and searching N-person game trees with large branching factors whose evaluation function is not, in general, zero-sum. Here mathematical game theory may prove to have a considerable impact on the direction taken by researchers.

I still think that computer chess is a unifying theme for a large number of problems in this area and as such I would *not* like to see the *ICCA Journal* change its name. In addition, Chess provides a central example of what we should aim at with respect to other games. I strongly feel that in order to keep abreast with new developments and challenges, and also encourage new research in the area of heuristic game playing, the ICCA should broaden its aims and scope to include other strategic games apart from Chess.

ICCA TOURNAMENT RULES REVISITED

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Dear ICCA Board and Fellow ICCA Members,

Since my first participation in an ICCA tournament (as member of the DARKTHOUGHT team during the 8th WCCC in Hong Kong, 1995) I have had the same mixed feelings about the definitions of "amateur vs professional" as anybody else. Therefore, I sent an initial proposal to David Levy on July 31, 1995, introducing "pure" and "semi" subcategories for both amateurs and professionals. Unfortunately, nothing ever came thereof although the proposal surely had some merits.

Right now, however, times have changed and so has my opinion as for the dreaded "amateur vs professional" case. Moreover, another important issue has emerged – namely "killer book lines busting commercial programs". Because any live tournament will be very limited in its possible number of rounds, I personally feel this issue to be of great importance in order to ensure future participation of commercial programs in ICCA events.

In the following, I propose new solutions to both of the above while hoping for your comments and fruitful discussions!

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Amateurs and Professionals

First of all, I propose to finance ICCA events solely by sponsor and other available ICCA money thus eliminating all entrance fees! The compulsory ICCA membership for all participants remains untouched thereby

With no more entrance fees, the necessity of different amateur, manufacturer, and professional titles being awarded at microcomputer events has gone. Therefore, I propose to solely award overall titles

Instead of distinguishing between amateurs and professionals, I propose to focus on the central subject of this distinction *commercial interest*

Definition: Anybody who conducts, is about to conduct, or is employed by somebody conducting commercial activities that might benefit from his activities related to computer chess has a *commercial interest* in computer chess

This definition of commercial interest clearly subsumes the authors and distributors of all commercial and shareware programs as well as people like the DEEP BLUE team hired for doing computer chess to benefit their employers' commercial activities. Furthermore, it subsumes those people whose commercial interest in computer chess according to the definition starts in the near future, e.g., shortly after winning an ICCA tournament (how long "shortly" actually means is open to debate, my suggestion runs from 1/2 to 1 year)

All participants with commercial interests in computer chess are *never* eligible for financial support by the ICCA during any of its events. In case of participants starting their commercial interests in computer chess within 1/2 to 1 year after an event they received financial support for by the ICCA, the according grants must be fully repaid

All participants without commercial interests in computer chess should receive financial support in decreasing order of estimated playing strength. Of course, everybody and especially university affiliates are encouraged to apply for other sources of financial support in order to save the ICCA as many expenses as possible

Last but not least, participants with commercial interests could possibly be made to pay a fee to the ICCA if their advertisements and/or products refer to their participation and/or titles in ICCA events

Opening Play

In order to prevent killer book lines (especially tuned against commercial programs) from intolerably distorting the result of an ICCA event, I propose the following scheme of random opening play

- 1 White chooses his first move and then Black his reply
- 2 White chooses an ECO opening system reachable from the current position
- 3 Black chooses an ECO opening system reachable from the choice White made in step (2)
- 4 From the ECO opening system of Black's choice in step (3) a random position no deeper than 8 moves from the starting position with WTM and roughly equal play according to general opening theory is chosen
- 5 The game starts from the position chosen in step (4) with both programs being allowed to use all their databases

A much simpler scheme which does not allow for the choice of special opening systems by the opponents would be directly to determine a random position according to step (4) at the start of the game

Furthermore, I suggest to extend all ICCA events to at least 7 rounds, of course, a 9 to 11 round WCCC would be even better!