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BEST PRACTICES, DIPLOMACY, AND AWARDS

Finding the best move is the essential task for a player who is aiming for a win. However, the task itself is dependent on many variables, such as time pressure, complexity of the position, the playing style of all players, the opponent's likes and dislikes, and the willingness to take any risk. The game of chess can be seen as a spectacle in which all these elements play their part. There are two fundamental truths: the game theoretical value of a position (the objective truth) and the truth of the strongest player (the winner of the game). In practice, only the last truth counts. In the past, International Grandmaster Donner once stated: "The most rewarding element in chess is to win a game from a lost position." Chess writers, reporters and annotators are keen on complex games. In their analyses they search for hidden ripostes, unexpected oversights, and missed defences. Some reporters take psychological factors also into account.

Emanuel Lasker was World Chess Champion from 1896 – 1921. He was undoubtedly the best chess player of that time, but surely he was also the best practitioner. He used best practices as a general outline for highlighting the most efficient way to reach his goal (he was always playing for a win). Among the chess players of his time, he was respected but not always well understood. Yet, the majority of his opponents were unable to show that he has taken too much risk. Since they felt it this way, they composed an argumentation full of psychological elements. Over the years, it is interesting to see to which statements this feeling has led, e.g., "From a pure chess point of view this idea is quite suspicious" (Kasparov, Mega Database 2015). For a detailed analysis of this statement, we refer to Nunn's contribution entitled *Maths and Chess* (pp. 214-218).

Three peculiar moves played by Lasker are supplied with annotations from the past and the present. Subsequently, they are analysed by three computer programs, viz. HOUDINI, STOCKFISH, and KOMODO. The outcome is fascinating, provided that we accept the opinions by the computers as the new truth.

Of course, relying on computers is a delicate issue. This is shown by Monty Newborn and Robert Hyatt in their article: *Computer Chess Endgame Play with Pawns: Then and Now*. The authors go as far back as 1975 and compare the best results from that time with the current results as achieved by CRAFTY. It is a pleasure to read

this article in a historical context, but it is also challenging to read it as an intermediate step for the next forty years and to imagine where we will stand in 2055. In the area of pawn endings it is clear that computer programs now already have far overtaken the human grandmasters.

In a similar vein Jos Uiterwijk completed his contribution of three installments on new results in Domineering by a concluding overview of what has been achieved so far and which open questions are still awaiting the next generation of researchers. We thank Jos for showing so profoundly the impact of safe moves on perfectly solving Domineering Boards.

It is not only chess that has a history and a future. This holds equally well for Diplomacy. The game is a realisation of the Greek διπλωμα, meaning to make a deal with other countries. It is the game in which best practices excel, viz., the practice of conducting negotiations between representations of states. The game was played at the first Computer Olympiad in 1989 and hopes to see a revival at the Computer Olympiad in Leiden (July 1, 2015). We point to p. 250 for more information.

As usual we honour our tournament winners, this time for Computer Bridge (pp. 220-223) and for many Computer Games played in the TCGA 2014 (pp. 226-229). Next to them we have several Award recipients. We mention them by below mainly referring to the pages where their merits are described in full and listed with their predecessors. For the Best Publication Award, the 2013 recipient is Abdallah Saffidine for *Solving Games and All That*, PhD thesis, Université Paris-Dauphine, Paris, France, July 2013. For 2014, the joint recipients are Gerd Isenberg and Mark Lefler for *The Chess Programming Wiki*: http://chessprogramming.wikispaces.com/. For the Best Journal Publication Award, the 2013 recipient is Kunihito Hoki for the article *Parallel Dovetailing and its Application to Depth-First Proof-Number Search.* The 2014 recipient will be announced in a next issue of this Journal.

When Cameron Brown was awarded the 9th Annual "Humies" Award in 2011, he made our community aware of this track of research (see pp. 224) by showing the importance of the Award for the research in many of our games. At that time Omid Eli David had assembled a team of co-workers and co-advisors that helped him to reach his goal of building (1) computer chess evaluation functions and (2) a computer chess search engine from scratch (i.e., a set of parameters that was not pre-tuned, but randomly set) that would play at par with the strongest chess programs of the world. He gloriously succeeded (see pp. 224). Our congratulations.

Finally, we have to look for the last time in this Editorial to the Past and to the Future. In the past we were facing the RYBKA case. On April 7, 2015 we were informed on the outcome of an appeal to FIDE. The December 2014 issue was almost in print and so we decided to include this information in the pages of this issue. Time may intermix, but news prevails. The report is given by ICGA President David Levy. The ICGA is grateful for the current developments and hope to see you all in Leiden, the Netherlands in June/July 2015.

Jaap van den Herik

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