

Statement about Fair Play

By Andy Howie

Recently, some concerns have been raised about Fair Play in tournaments. The concerns relate to the cooperation between organisers, arbiters and fair play officials. We recognise these concerns and want to address them.

To that end, we have begun discussions. We have formed a working group with the arbiters and we will do the same with organizers. We have also scheduled meetings with various commissions within the FIDE family. Importantly, we will also reach out to the players. We want to better understand what they want in terms of Fair Play. Ultimately, our main concern is to ensure that they play in a safe environment with thorough but not oppressive security controls.

While it is not possible to tackle all the problems at once, there are some immediate steps we can take. Firstly, there is a concern that with a Chief Arbiter and a Fair Play Officer at a tournament, there are two captains on one ship. This can lead to friction. This is not what we want. So, we want to emphasise that the Chief Arbiter is in command. The CA is in charge and can make the final decisions regarding the running of the tournament. We will also make sure that this hierarchical structure is well represented in the rules. It is our strong desire that the arbiters and the fair play staff form a team at tournaments.

Another issue is trust. Arbiters and Fair Play staff need to trust each other. This means that arbiters should not be checked at tournaments. The only exception would be at the request of the CA. We also recognise that arbiters need access to PGN files in order to verify player claims. In large tournaments, not all arbiters will need this access, and the CA will determine who needs it, but in general, all arbiters who need access should be given it.

Finally, we recognise the need to improve the supervision system. For example, when a qualified FPO is on site, supervision is unnecessary. FPL is currently working on improving the supervision system to make it simpler and easier. This is a priority. We will also make it more transparent how, for example, arbiters can earn FPE and FPO norms; we want a system that works.

This is the way forward and we seek good cooperation with all parties within the FIDE family. However, this does not mean that we condone every kind of attack. For example, we were dismayed by a recent article in *Chess Magazine* which “jokingly” suggested that Fair Play personnel should be shot. Of course, this kind of childish, witless way of trying to get attention is not what helps to ensure the safety of tournaments. There were other suggestions in the article that are blatantly untrue. For example, there is a rumour that we strip-searched a woman at a tournament. We have investigated the matter and there is no truth to it.

There is a perception that Fair Play is about policing. But that is not what we want. Instead, we want to be a soft force, quietly and diligently enforcing the rules against cheating. We would want to be seen as an asset, not another organisational burden. We want to help organisers create a safe space where players feel comfortable playing their games. The immediate priorities for the Commission are to build relationships and trust, to look at the feedback we get from different parties, what can be done quickly and what will take more time, to look at ideas for communicating to a wide audience about what we do, to continue training. Both Vincent (FPL Secretary) and I are always willing to listen to ideas and concerns. Our doors are always open, so if you have anything, please contact us!

Anything is possible if you have the time, all we ask is that you give us the time to look at what has happened and make the necessary changes.

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Andy Howie

FPL Commission Chair