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Arkadij Naiditsch: “Why the German A-team will not participate in the Olympiad”

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Due to financial problems and organizational failure by the German Chess Federation, the four German top players won't play at the upcoming Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk. This is what Arkadij Naiditsch tries to make clear in an angry open letter which he sent to ChessVibes. The German top grandmaster doesn't mince words.

Open letter by GM Arkadij Naiditsch

Why the German A-team will not participate in the 2010 Olympiad

Cc: Prof. Dr. Von Weizsäcker

This letter is not addressed to anybody directly. As a player of the German National team I would like to make some things clear about my hard working Federation and its President, Prof. Dr. Von Weizsäcker.

Let's start with the fact that nobody from the German A-team is going to participate in the Chess Olympiad this year. These players are Georg Meier, Jan Gustafsson, Daniel Fridman and me, Arkadij Naiditsch. Why? The easy answer is that the biggest chess federation in Europe, about 100,000 active members, couldn't manage to find money to pay the players.

So, the next question is “how could this happen”? This question is easy to answer as well: nobody in the federation has been doing anything for at least five years. The German Chess Federation has no sponsors at the moment, so the money is only coming from their members. Generally, even this should be enough to have a great and lazy life, but the main problem is the meetings attended by huge amounts of hungry officials that are being held almost monthly in expensive hotels.

Let me now become a bit more direct, because I would like to single out a few people with whom I have had to deal with personally.

1) Mr. U. Bönsch – National Coach

The first Olympiad that I played in was in Turin, 2006. I played on the first board for the German team and Mr. Bönsch was already an experienced and well-respected trainer. But the strange thing was, all he ever did was distribute the line-up for the next match and make a great black tea that we drank together every evening. Not once did he make the slightest effort to help anybody from the team chess wise.

So, year after year, the chess help from Mr. Bönsch remained the same: nothing but tea. In my opinion, our national trainer could be a hero in any teahouse!

2) Mr. Klaus Deventer – responsible for finding and distributing money for the national team. In German: Leistungssportreferent.

With regard to finding money there isn't much to say. I think Mr. Deventer in his crushing career in the Chess Federation never even gave it a try.

In distributing money for the national team he has clear methods and opinions. That is, the national team should play for free!! By the way, to be clearer, Mr. Deventer is the individual who is responsible for fighting for us to get money. So, from a 110,000 Euro budget he manages for "top chess" in Germany, less than a quarter is left for the Olympiad for male and female teams combined.

Strangely, Mr. Deventer is a very important man in the federation. Personally, I could never understand what he is actually doing. And I think after many years of deep thinking, I finally got a little clue about his function; it is to try to stop anybody from being a professional chess player in Germany. Mr. Deventer really hates this. Rarely it is possible to meet somebody as unpleasant as Mr. Deventer.

3) Mr. Ralph Alt – Tournament Director

Mr. Alt is a famous public prosecutor in Germany. He is the organizer of many official tournaments in Germany, such as the National Individual Championship.

He only has one problem: he is always scheduling these championships to match his holidays. So, sometimes he gets lucky and there is nothing running at the same time. No such luck this year. He held the German National Championship at exactly the same dates as the European Individual Championships. A normal reaction would be, what the heck? Easy answer: Sorry, holidays are holidays. Can't move them! So nobody participated in it from the A-team and the young German player Niclas Huschenbeth managed to win the title. Congrats to him as he showed great fighting spirit in the tournament.

My last German Championship was in 2007. In that year Mr. Alt showed absolute class. He found a city in Germany that has no train or bus (or anything else) connection. So taxi was the only way to reach it. Respect for Mr. Alt!! This is really not so easy to do. Give it a try. 😊

4) Mr. Jörg Schulz – fifteen different positions!!

Personally, I didn't have much to do with Mr. Schulz as he has always been responsible for the German Youth Chess Federation. (Deutsche Schach Jugend). Slowly, over the years he took over about fifteen different positions within the federation and is almost completely in charge of the whole money flow now. Bravo to Mr. Schulz!

For example, he created a chess company that is paying the players for participating in the European Team Championships as well as Olympiads. The company is making no money but paying us. Wow, really great job by Mr. Schulz.

That's all from the main German Federation Crushers! There might be few more that I don't know, but they are probably in hiding.

About Mr. Prof. Dr. Robert von Weizsäcker I will write a bit down below. First you will have to read his great letter that he wrote to the four of us (German A-team). For other people in the Federation, there are so many that deserve a few choice words,

but I think it wouldn't be fair to the few people who are trying to do something for German chess. Anyway, my many thanks to these few.
Dear readers, I hope you now have a bit of an overview of what is going on in my Federation.

This year, the A-team has said that we will not play for the funny money they are offering and asked for conditions. It drove almost all the guys in the Federation completely crazy! How is it possible that we will not play?? Do we have to cancel now a few dinners? No way we gonna do that!!"

Mr. Deventer immediately wrote a very long and boring letter, where he is comparing us with soccer players and asking us to play almost for free because the German National Soccer team is also not getting their normal salary for going to Africa. Funny, no? I guess then we have to compare Mr. Deventer to a Russian oligarch and ask him to support us from his own budget?!

Afterwards, we half-heartedly attempted to find sponsors ourselves, which didn't work out. So the result was, of course, that the German A-team is not going to play the 2010 Chess Olympiad.

This is when Prof. Dr. Von Weizsäcker is coming into the game (he has been the German Chess President for the last two years).

So far, according to the words of Jan Gustafsson (all the contact was going through him) our President supported us, the players.

But on June 29th we received a letter from Prof. Dr. Robert von Weizsäcker that completely shocked me. Up to that point my opinion of our President was quite positive; he seemed to be a man with an understanding of chess players. Here is the letter [translated into English by CV - German version [in PDF here](#)]:

Concerning: Chess Olympiad Khanty-Mansiysk

Dear members of the men's national team, dear chess friends,

In answer to my letter of May 19th, 2010 Mr Gustafsson answered by email on June 10th, 2010 that, on the given conditions you are not willing to play in Khanty-Mansiysk. Besides, he has started an initiative to find a sponsor as soon as possible, something that was clearly supported by me. To my knowledge this initiative hasn't had the desired effect.

If no last-minute sponsor will contact Mr Gustafsson soon, this means the German Chess Federation won't be able to send you to the Chess Olympiad. I wouldn't only regret this terribly, but I'd be personally disappointed as well.

I can only partly understand that you keep on insisting on demands that, despite great efforts, couldn't be fulfilled by either the German Chess Federation or the company.

Therefore I would personally like to ask you to reconsider your position and accept the same terms as two years ago. In case you're still prepared to accept this, please declare this to the team captain not later

than July 2nd 2010. After that he will be forced to nominate other players. I would have liked to push this deadline up front, if there wasn't a deadline set by FIDE to enter the team.

At this weekend's meeting of the Top Sport Commission it was decided that your status as selected players would become inactive for the time being, if you're not prepared to play the upcoming Olympiad under the current conditions.

This would imply that any course of action to support you as top players would become impossible. Furthermore, for the year 2011 the team captain was requested to check whether the criteria for future support, i.e. the willingness of all players to cooperate with the federation, are still being met. I fully support this decision because in my opinion we cannot simply move on.

Support by the German Chess Federation, which partly involves a longer period of time, is naturally associated with the expectation to engage in an appropriate manner and in a responsible way for German chess.

On the other hand the German Chess Federation doesn't want to close all doors. In any case it would be useful to have a meeting after the Olympiad, to which our Top Sport Coordinator will invite you, to discuss the situation. Still I hope that all these considerations won't be necessary. The decision is yours.

Best regards,
Yours truly,

Robert von Weizsäcker.

Cool, no? Let me clarify a few things:

Prof. Dr. Von Weizsäcker found 0 Euros in two years of being the President of the German Chess Federation. (Maybe he simply has no time, being a Professor at a few universities?) The huge support he is threatening to cancel is this: for myself as German number one (my current ELO rating is 2684), the German Federation covers about half of my expenses for playing in exactly one tournament, the European Championship. That amounts to about 800 Euros a year, nothing more.

Now, of course, their direct threat to cancel all that help is making me sleep badly and giving me nightmares. Next time, maybe if I cover the coffee bill I hope Prof. Dr. Von Weizsäcker and my hard working Chess Federation will not cancel the important support for me?! We will see in the future if they have any mercy.

As we know, Prof. Dr. Von Weizsäcker is running his campaign for the ECU Presidency, and many European countries are giving their support to him. Now, the logical conclusion would be since he could do absolutely nothing for chess in his own country in two years, or again had no time for it, which, of course, led to the same result, can he do something for Europe? I would say probably not. So here comes the idea. Maybe we could open a charity foundation for the German Chess Federation and for Prof. Dr. Von Weizsäcker? Many people are sending small amounts for

“saving the forest” so maybe it could work with my dear Federation and Prof. Dr. Von Weizsäcker, too? It is hard to find anybody coming across as more poor and helpless than the German Federation.

Hope you enjoyed reading my statement. And please don't get the idea that I have exaggerated. I really did my best to stay as close to the facts as possible. 😊

Grandmaster Arkadij Naiditsch

Comments

111 Responses to “Arkadij Naiditsch: “Why the German A-team will not participate in the Olympiad””

1. Thomas on July 28th, 2010 09:23

There is of course a translation error in Weizsäcker’s letter, one key phrase should read “your status as selected players would become inactive for the time being, if you’re NOT prepared to play the upcoming Olympiad under the current conditions.”

2. [Peter Doggers](#) on July 28th, 2010 09:42

Thx, dear proof reader Thomas! 😊Corrected.

3. Faraday on July 28th, 2010 09:45

Can this really happen in Germany? What a shame!!!

4. steven on July 28th, 2010 10:08

If this is indeed not exaggerated then anyone voting for Von Weizsäcker in the ECU-elections would be even weaker and more incompetent as Von Weizsäcker himself.

I don’t like Danailov as a person but i hope he will be elected because at least he’s a pro in terms of finding money and sponsors, organizing events and coming up with new ideas.

Great letter by GM Arkadij Naiditsch with a lot of spirit and sense of humour.

5. steven on July 28th, 2010 10:15

It’s quite possible that Von Weizsäcker is a puppet on a string of people who dislike Danailov.

He can’t do a shit for his own country and now he has the ambition to become president of the ECU ?!?

6. NBC on July 28th, 2010 10:57

I’d take an incompetent puppet any day over morally corrupted people such as Danailov.

7. Thomas on July 28th, 2010 11:02

@Peter: You’re welcome, no big deal ... I was obviously puzzled by the “first version” of von Weizsäcker’s letter and could check the German original.

@steven: As ECU president, von Weizsäcker would be head of a team – and Naiditsch’s complaints are still primarily about other federation officials. And Danailov? Yes, he succeeded in finding money ... for Topalov (hence himself)

and a few others. Even if there weren't any issues with his character, like openly hating another top player, his presidency would be problematic because he is very closely associated with one top player.

8. john on July 28th, 2010 11:20

this is a disgrace, the people mentioned in this letter by a top GM should hang their heads in shame. what a pathetic bunch of incompetent jumped up idiots!

9. [Poek](#) on July 28th, 2010 11:39

Too bad Naiditsch doesn't mention the conditions offered by the federation. The main point of the article is that it wasn't enough: so why doesn't he want to tell how much it is?

10. ChessGirl on July 28th, 2010 11:41

As we say in Spanish, "no ha dejado títere con cabeza"! (He didn't leave a single puppet with its head on). Thumbs up for demanding good working conditions.

11. [Arne Moll](#) on July 28th, 2010 11:57

He does kind of mention it, Poek:

"In distributing money for the national team he has clear methods and opinions. That is, the national team should play for free!! By the way, to be clearer, Mr. Deventer is the individual who is responsible for fighting for us to get money. So, from a 110,000 Euro budget he manages for "top chess" in Germany, less than a quarter is left for the Olympiad for male and female teams combined."

It doesn't sound like much, especially if all expenses have to be paid from this as well.

12. Standardbenutzer on July 28th, 2010 11:58

Ralph Alt is a judge, not a prosecutor. He is right right now busy with Ivan Demjanjuk.

13. guitarspider on July 28th, 2010 12:01

Hilarious letter. I really hope it gets some things moving, our players deserve better than that.

14. Chess fan on July 28th, 2010 12:13

I am one of the 100,000 active members of the German Chess Federation as Arkadij mentioned.

And I would like to thank our Number One for this Open Letter. I hope, this will turn out to be very positive for my country.

Thank you, Arkadij!

15. marpada on July 28th, 2010 12:39

I could have never imagined that this situation could happen in Germany, one of the biggest chess federations in the world.

My sincere congratulations to Mr. Naiditsch's for his brave letter, if only there were more professional players with the stones to condemn publicly the corruption and incompetence of politicians.

16. Serdal on July 28th, 2010 13:31

There is one notion inside the German Chess Federation that has been criticised for many years now (and I think rightly so), that the federation should promote chess as a game for all people, i.e. a great deal of support does not go to the professionals but a little bit to many amateurs. This is one of the reasons why the largest chess federation in Europe hasn't produced a top ten chess players for roughly 25 years.

Most officials disapprove on a professional chess career but advice young players to rather pick up a 'proper' profession.

And there's a rule that the money for national team players may not be taken from the members' fees but has to come from an external sponsor.

Nothing will change, though.

17. iLane on July 28th, 2010 13:40

"Therefore I would personally like to ask you to reconsider your position and accept the same terms as two years ago."

It seems that they were offered with the same conditions as 2 years ago. Do I miss something in the story?

18. patzer on July 28th, 2010 13:41

No worries Mr Naiditsch In Belgium it is even worse last year the Belgian chess federation's treasurer was caught for stealing 100 000€ from the federation which left them bankrupt ! and so now they cannot even afford to send a team to the olympiad (which only gets its travel expenses paid anyway) so we probably won't even have a team



19. Dr. Wolfgang Berghorn on July 28th, 2010 13:53

What a horrible story about the German Chess Federation and their officials!
What a great and brave letter written by GM A. Naiditsch!
What a shame for Germany!

20. Jon on July 28th, 2010 14:30

If there is a German principle that the national team, of any sport, should get external sponsors, you cannot really blame Weiszäcker and the chess federation.

However, the letter of GM Naiditch illustrates a general problem: officials, administrators, politicians, etc, are using too much of the money that should be used on people who are directly involved with “doing the work”, including chess players.

21. Stephen on July 28th, 2010 14:35

It seems that there are two separate arguments in GM Naiditch’s letter. The first is a legitimate point, that he believes that the German Chess Federation has some management issues and is not going to put forward the strongest national team that it possibly can.

The second is just a moan, that the German Federation won’t pay him what he demands. Tough luck. Like professionals in other fields, if he feels that the offer (the same as two years ago) from the client is unsatisfactory then he should take his services elsewhere. Go play in a sponsored tournament or a match.

22. KingTal on July 28th, 2010 14:56

And people are always complaining about the Russian Chess Federation. As you can see there are problems of different kinds in Germany and Belgium and who knows where else too. Maybe Naiditsch will play for Latvia next year or maybe he will flee to the USA... haha... let’s wait for Weiszäcker’s reaction. The chess game gets more and more unpopular these days but it doesn’t surprise that our society produces such ugliness if you watch our values and what the media is educating us.

23. [Colin McGourty](#) on July 28th, 2010 14:57

In light of Naiditsch’s comments it’s interesting to see what the top Polish player, Wojtaszek, had to say about the Polish Chess Federation:

“Well, nothing’s changed in that regard for many years – the resources that we get for development are very small. At the European Team Championships and the Olympiad the players take part for nothing, which is inconceivable in other countries. So it’s hard to be surprised when some people withdraw from the team [...] No doubt it’s a bit strange that as the number one on the ranking list and a second for the World Champion I don’t get support from the federation, but as I said before – it’s nothing new to me and I’ve already got used to it.”

<http://www.chessintranslation.com/2010/07/wojtaszek-on-being-anands-second/>

But I recommend reading the interview not for the politics but for a glimpse at the life of one of Anand's seconds at a World Championship match!

24. Serdal on July 28th, 2010 14:57

To be fair to Naiditsch and his colleagues, the players made it clear after the last Olympiad that they would not play again for this money. Plus, the fact that they need sponsors to pay the players is not really an excuse for the officials whose job it is to find them. But the players on the team generally don't feel supported by the federation, it's not solely about money. In my opinion I don't think von Weizsäcker is a good choice as ECU president, because he never ceases to highlight his lack of time and I don't know if he's the right person to get things done. Apart from that I think he is a respectable person and it might bring some credibility into chess management as far as federations are concerned.

25. [silvakov](#) on July 28th, 2010 14:58

That's something I never understood entirely in sports in general: how does it work when your country asks for your services? In chess, it's like any other tournament or deal with a particular: the country has to pay (and generally speaking, it means pay very well). Is it the same in sports like tennis?

26. Rajesh on July 28th, 2010 15:02

Dear friends,

I am very saddened after reading the article.

I am from India, still a developing country and relatively poor than Germany.

But still never heard of such a thing in my own country where we have lot of sponsors and govt help and support to chess players

It is a real shame for that a player like Arkadij and his team, hailing from one of the richest country in the world has to go through this.

Arkadij, we are with you.

27. noyb on July 28th, 2010 16:36

My sincerest sympathies to Mr. Naiditsch. Things are even worse here in the U.S.A. If it weren't for the patronage of wealthy individuals like Mr. Rex Sinquefeld, who foots the bill for the U.S. Championships, we'd have the same problems here.

It's a pity that Chess isn't more popular and that it doesn't enjoy more support world-wide. And yet everyone is supporting Kirsan?! What has he done and how has chess improved under his leadership? Sadly, if Dr. Robert von Weizsäcker is representative of what we could expect from Karpov2010, it

doesn't sound like there is any hope for chess as a viable game/sport in the near future...

28. [Colin McGourty](#) on July 28th, 2010 17:03

In a way I'm not sure the problem with team competitions is that exclusive to chess e.g. in football, players usually get relatively little, or sometimes nothing, for representing their country. There's often a win bonus, which is incidentally something the Russian chess team are going to try out – they'll only get paid if they win a medal at the Olympiad!

The huge difference, of course, is that the top players are earning a fortune all-year-round playing for their club sides in football, so that the money for internationals doesn't really matter. For chess players, especially those a bit lower down the pecking order, it must be hard to accept taking a break from earning and possibly even having to meet some expenses.

29. test on July 28th, 2010 17:28

I think many other players from different federations recognize this situation. (See examples above.) It is symptomatic of the chess world. No wonder chess has a hard time making it big.

I had no idea it was this bad in the German federation considering it is one if not the strongest in Europe.

>> I am from India, ... where we have lot of sponsors and govt help and support to chess players

But not everything is as rosy as it seems according to these accounts from GM Koneru Humpy:

[World number two female player protests](#)

[Sundar: Imagination and half truths](#)

[Humpy replies to Sundar – issues open challenge](#)

[Chess Players Association urges compromise](#)

30. Thomas on July 28th, 2010 17:37

To add on Colin's post: Ironically, the Olympiad may be more attractive for some players who struggle even more. If they play well, they might "earn" a spot in team competitions that DO offer money – at club level in the German Bundesliga and some other leagues. This could be the case for the Belgian, maybe also the Polish team – while Naiditsch and colleagues no longer need such publicity

31. Septimus on July 28th, 2010 18:00

Wow! Just wow! Naiditsch ripped the Federation a new one.

Shocking state of affairs. The old Soviet system of government patronage is looking better and better every day. Can anybody clue us in on the number

and salaries of these top officials? I bet the mofos would be pulling something like this–

>http://www.durangoherald.com/sections/News/2010/07/23/California_town_in_uproar_over_council_members_pay/

32. [Arne Moll](#) on July 28th, 2010 18:08

I agree, Colin, the money aspect is the least spectacular of the letter. But in exposing the Federation board members and their motives (if true), it is one of a kind! The only thing I'm wondering is what Naiditsch would do if the federation somehow came up with money after all. You'd think he would still refuse to play for these people.

33. Daniel on July 28th, 2010 18:08

@Naiditsch

The US Chess Federation is 100000 times worse. Though I understand your plight. I pity chess does not get the attention and money it deserves. Anyways it saddens me to hear German Chess is not the paradise described to us unfortunate USA players.

@NBC could not agree more!

34. test on July 28th, 2010 18:20

>> *"in football, players usually get relatively little, or sometimes nothing, for representing their country"*

Some Google results for earnings in the recent soccer world cup.

"Steven Gerrard and Wayne Rooney can take some consolation in the fact they will each pick up £500,000 for just two days' work at a gladiatoresque skills competition next month." (Which is about 600 thousand Euros each.)

"The prize money is unlikely to make a lot of difference to most players in this year's squad. Nearly all of them already have multimillion-dollar contracts with European clubs and are set financially."

"Take Lionel Messi, dubbed the world's best-paid footballer by France Football, which pegged his annual earnings at 33 million euros, including endorsements."

[Soundoff: Should Players Receive Big Bonus Payments for Winning the World Cup?](#)

"Apparently Spain's players will each receive €600,000 (about £495,206 or \$716,825 US) if they win the World Cup in South Africa. And – predictably? – the peasants are revolting."

All of the above is just prize money. I don't think any professional soccer player has ever had to pay his own expenses.

In every sport players will complain about prize money, but in soccer they are bickering over millions, in chess over hundreds. Not an insignificant difference I would say. Maybe I am exaggerating a bit, but clearly the scales are hugely different. How often have you seen players or teams refusing to play over money in soccer? In chess it happens all the time.

35. test on July 28th, 2010 18:28

In short: in soccer they do not have to pay their own expenses (and they stay in luxury resorts), get paid a hefty amount for participating in team competitions and on top of that they get huge bonuses for every win.

36. [Colin McGourty](#) on July 28th, 2010 19:25

I'm certainly not arguing top football players have any financial problems! But relative to their normal wages any money they get for playing for the national team tends to be small. The World Cup is a bit of an exception, though even that Spanish bonus for winning it – not something to bank on – is still only a few weeks wages for their star players. What I was more thinking about was when the national teams play friendlies or qualifying competitions. In that case club sides often complain (bitterly) that they're paying the wages and have to suffer the consequences if a player gets injured while playing for the national team.

Anyway, I guess that's all a bit off topic 😊 Arne, I agree Naiditsch's comments are hard to match for the personal attacks on board members, but I've seen e.g. some interviews about the Polish Chess Federation where the criticism's just as brutal (just not directed at named individuals). Wojtaszek is very mild-mannered in comparison.

Naiditsch's comments seem to be aimed at taking advantage of the FIDE elections and the enormous embarrassment he can cause Weizsäcker – though going quite so far looks like burning bridges to me. Though as he pointed out, and this seems to be the same situation in lots of federations, you don't need to fear losing next to nothing...

37. Goendi on July 28th, 2010 19:27

@patzer: That is not correct. It is not because 100.000€ is missing under the mandate of the former Belgian treasurer, that there were no funds to get a team to the olympiad. Also, the Belgian chess federation is not bankrupt. Please don't put rumours on a public stage, if you have no idea what you are talking about.

38. xy on July 28th, 2010 19:34

"The old Soviet system of government patronage is looking better and better every day."

true , also maybe it's because in capitalist societies , any sport or activity that do not generate enough money and interest from the masses and medias will always be overlooked .

Some posts here compare with soccer , but soccer will never have any problem to find sponsors and get the money flowing . Chess was extremely popular in Soviet Union . Today in our globalized world , many other entertainments/sports/activities are way ahead of chess

I see only 3 solutions to this problem . One is to teach chess at school , the other is to bring chess to the mass medias (tv) at all costs , the third is if some very rich AND honest benefactors come to rescue it and inject more money in the game .

39. kees on July 28th, 2010 20:08

The problem is the bureaucrats. If they don't do their job they should be fired. Unfortunately this won't happen because the bureaucrats cover eachothers' backs.

40. Spectator on July 28th, 2010 20:35

Interesting letter and discussion in the comments. I am not familiar with the reality of German chess and now only 'know' what is written in the open letter.

Does anybody know:

Where – besides non existent sponsoring – does the money of the federation come from? The 100.000 members? Do they pay an annual fee? How much? Does the German government support the federation? How much overhead does the federation have? A bureau? Where? How big and how many people? What is the total budget of the German federation? Are the administrators being paid or do they work (or do nothing as the open letter suggests) as volunteers?

41. Septimus on July 28th, 2010 21:47

Playing for you country should be an honor, but it is also the government's responsibility to ensure that the name of the country is upheld in the best possible way. Asking players to fend for themselves when they represent the nation is just stupid. Perhaps the German government should step in and fire every single person in management positions.

42. [Arne Moll](#) on July 28th, 2010 22:02

Kees, I think It's not so much bureaucracy as simple incompetence that's the issue here. These people obviously have no clue as to what they're doing and why. They also clearly have no incentive to change things or find creative solutions. Bureaucracy has to do with an abundance of regulations and procedures – don't think that's the case here.

43. George Jones on July 28th, 2010 22:13

Every time I go to Germany, I can always get 3 (or more!) monthly chess mags at the train stations (Rochade, Schach Deutsche Schachzeitung, Schachmagazin, Kaissiber, plus another kids-only mag, and English-language New In Chess). Opposed to this, finding Europe Echecs in France is 50/50 at best. So chess I surmise is decently popular at the grassroots level in Germany. As with other cases, the politicians have overtaken the system. Laughy that the suggestions are to increase the government influence, that would multiply the parasites!

44. [Spectator](#) on July 28th, 2010 22:18

Ohne jemanden in Schutz nehmen zu wollen:

Ich habe selbst schon Landessportverbände anderer Sportarten steuerlich betreut. Der DSB ist genauso wie z.B. der DFB ein gemeinnütziger Verein. Jeder Verein hat die 4 Bereiche "Ideeller Bereich" (hier spielen sich auch die Mitgliedsbeiträge oder Spenden ab), "Vermögensverwaltung", "Zweckbetrieb" und "wirtschaftlicher Geschäftsbetrieb" (hier ist meist das Sponsoring anzusiedeln).

Alles was ein gemeinnütziger Verein im ideellen Bereich macht unterliegt einem strengen Blick des Finanzamts. Die hier erwirtschafteten Mittel dürfen nicht zur Finanzierung von Spielerhonoraren verwendet werden ohne die Gemeinnützigkeit des Vereins zu riskieren. Solche Honorare müssen aus einem wirtschaftlichen Geschäftsbetrieb stammen.

Hier hat der DSB allerdings hauptsächlich nur seine Wirtschaftsdienst GmbH zu bieten, da es in Sachen Sponsoring mau aussieht. Nur die hier erwirtschafteten Gewinnen können eingesetzt werden – unabhängig davon wieviel Kohle der DSB an Mitgliedsbeiträgen oder Spenden einnimmt.

Da man einfach etwas die Zeichen der Zeit verschlafen hat fristet die Wirtschaftsdienst GmbH eher ein Schattendasein. Mögliche Märkte haben sich längst CB und diverse Schachversande aufgeteilt. Das Problem wird somit sicherlich in Zukunft kaum besser werden, wenn man nicht lernt, die Akquise von Sponsoren etwas professioneller anzugehen.

45. Ron on July 28th, 2010 22:25

Playing for your country is an honour, its a disgrace that Naiditsch and others are always complaining about money.

46. Charly on July 28th, 2010 22:48

@Ron:

I try to translate a german saying: You cannot eat honour! (Ehre kann man nicht essen!)

47. Dude on July 28th, 2010 22:52

What about: 'honour doesn't pay the bills'?

48. domino on July 28th, 2010 23:06

You can add England to the list of countries with incompetent and corrupt Federation officials.

The English Federation were unwilling to offer the number 1 player (Adams) any sensible conditions to play in the forthcoming Olympiad. His participation was only secured at the last moment when a private individual agreed to pay his fee.

This is despite the Federation recently receiving about 1 million Euros as a result of a wealthy individual dying and leaving some money in his will. Not a penny of this money has been spent on professional chess. Instead, officials enjoy frequent pointless meetings and travelling the world on expenses.

49. ChessGirl on July 28th, 2010 23:19

@ Ron:

I assume then, that whatever your work is you would be willing to do it for free for your country? That is, let us say that you are the best lawyer in your country, so the High Court calls you to work for them, what an honour, of course you will do it for free, you will go home and your family will be starving, but this will not matter because working for your country "is an honour", right????

Get a grip.

50. Ron on July 28th, 2010 23:28

@Chessgirl, its not about work, its about playing for your country. If you see that as work, don't play (!).

51. HaroldChasen on July 28th, 2010 23:32

I am a german amateur (ELO about 2200) and do not agree with the majority of comments. I do not like Naiditsch's letter and the reactions praising him.

- To start with the critic on the national trainer Bönsch: Frankly spoken I do not have a clue what a player/trainer of 2500 like Bönsch could offer a rising world class or close to that player like Naiditsch. What did Naiditsch expect? Concrete analyses of games? Hints for his openings? When I read an article from Tukmakov, who lead the ukrainian team to their gold medal (i do not remember the year, maybe 2002/04), it was all about keeping Ivanchuks nerves strong and bringing up a team spirit. Was Bönsch unable to do something like this or were the players, especially Naiditsch not interested?

- The complaints about Deventer are very unclear.
- Ralph Alt as tournament director is an amateur.

So one could turn Naiditsch's complaints about the tournament dates matching holidays around: Alt sacrifices his holidays to help organising chess tournaments. If there weren't amateurs like him, tournaments would not be held at all or be more expensive for the players – as the living of a professional manager/tournament director has to be paid to. The complaints about the tournament venue 2007 – Bad Königshofen, a very small town in Bavaria – are ridiculous: Of course even this small town can be reached by bus – maybe Naiditsch did not find the bus connection.

- Concerning von Weizsäcker Naiditsch only brings the letter, which in my opinion is a modest but nevertheless not unkind try to find a solution with the top grandmaster.

Still, why does Naiditsch not play for his country, honour and the same amount of money like two years ago?

As a whole Naiditsch's letter is very disrespectful and a kind of unfriendly behaviour. Even as a young person he could act more calmly and with other words.

52. ChessGirl on July 28th, 2010 23:53

@Ron: That's exactly what they're doing 😊

53. Jurgen on July 29th, 2010 00:01

I completely agree with HaroldChasen's comment. I don't see Naiditsch searching for a solution...

54. Bartleby on July 29th, 2010 00:38

I always took it for granted that the job description "functionary in a chess federation" doesn't attract the most dynamic personalities. Naiditsch uses strong language to express that he expects more from his functionaries than I do. With all sorts of personal attacks strewn in, the letter reminds me of Humpy's attack against her federation. Unbalanced, but honest. Let's hope the players and functionaries are pragmatic enough to try to build something, not just complain. Build trust. If I read it correctly, money is the reason they don't play at the Olympiad, but the reason for Naiditsch's anger goes deeper. He doesn't feel respected, and doesn't show respect himself.

55. Henk de Jager on July 29th, 2010 00:46

This letter is a very funny and effective way by Mr Naiditsch to commit suicide with regard to his chances of ever again gaining the support of the German chess federation, however small it may be, but it might have become bigger in

the future, although i understand mr Naidistch is kind of tired of waiting for this. It is also a very ineffective and somewhat childish letter as to its tone, but hell, as a reader I aplaud it! i sincerely hope we get some of the accused to answer and wish mr naiditsch all the best, although I would consider moving to another country in his case.

56. Ron on July 29th, 2010 00:54

Its even doubtful, ethically speaking, if such letters should be published by this site.

57. Tony on July 29th, 2010 02:14

@Ron – your attitude is very idealistic. These players are not in the same situation as say wealthy professional sports players. To compare it to say the Olympics in 88' (i believe) when the USA was tired of being beaten in basketball and sent over a team of elite professionals, who played for free. This is chess and the reality is that the players just want to be compensated for their time AND the effort put in behind the scene to prepare for an event. Should they play a novelty that can earn them points in a big tournament that would result in a prize at an event that gets them nothing? I am not sure how you make your living but there is only so much pro bono you can do before you are forced to face reality. It should be the national organizations job to find support for its professional players.

There is nothing unethical about publishing a letter from a professional player about a public organization. Its call public media!!

58. Aslan on July 29th, 2010 04:20

Upon reading the letter you can understand the frustrations of the player who is probably voicing the unhappiness of many players.

I do not agree with the comments attacking GM Naiditsch such as by Harold Chasen as that is missing the point, do not shoot the messenger who is delivering the message!!!

It requires members of the German Chess Federation to democratically question the contributions of the administrators to discover if there are problems and to have the members assist and guide the administrators.

The German Chess Federation deserves the support of its members but at the same time there must be transparency and accountability. These go hand in hand and it does not depend on whether administrators are volunteers or paid employees. Once you have assumed a position in a public organisation or an organisation that represents the interests of certain members of the public there is a moral duty to discharge your obligations to the best of your ability or else to either improve your contribution or step down.

The German Chess Federation should take this opportunity to respond to the comments of GM Naiditsch since it affects ALL members of the Federation and not just the A-team. Each and every member is entitled to have transparency and accountability in order to continue to support the Federation.

Best of luck to the A-team and to the Federation

59. [Peggy Sue](#) on July 29th, 2010 05:31

I've had the misfortune of knowing Mr Naiditsch since shortly after his family moved to Germany. I've had the further misfortune of playing him a few times in tournaments (mostly rapid) in the times when he was just a talented youth and not yet a strong GM. The only thing he cares about is his personal gain or profit. You might argue that as a professional chess player this is how it should be, but then he should concentrate on his profit instead of disreputing officials. He has proved in the past that he doesn't give a damn about his country or its reputation so my opinion is that he should play where and what he wants, earn as much money as possible, but stop pretending that representing his country means anything at all to him.

BTW, anyone of the people celebrating him now remember that he was caught cheating in an internet tournament?

60. [David Smerdon](#) on July 29th, 2010 06:59

You know in Australia, not only do we get paid nothing and have no sponsors, but we also have to pay all our own travel expenses. And considering the Olympiad is almost always in Europe, the damage is usually significant. And yet, the top players invariably play. I guess it's different when you're a professional, but to be fair, we still sacrifice our holidays or university examinations for the honour and the glory (and, of course, the Bermuda party!).

61. [Kein Naiditsch Fan, aber interessiert](#) on July 29th, 2010 07:45

I hope, this letter will start a serious discussion in Germany. This letter is maybe not fair in some parts, but, if some of the strongest players in our country (Khenkin, Naiditsch, Gusti) feel they have to go to public in that way: than there is a big probability, that something goes wrong in our federation. So I am looking forward to the following discussion. As small patzer with 1800, I (luckly) do not have to try to get my monthly salary from chesstournaments. I could not understand, if some 2400/2500 would write something like that letter. But we are talking about almost 2700, so if it is not possible, to pay the top (professional) players of Germany with a reasonable amount (I am not talking about soccer payment, and btw, they are earning enough in their clubs), whicht they would loose, since they can not play other tournaments – than I can understand that they are not interested in playing. I for myself would not die for the honour of playing for Germany ... The only remaining question for an open discussion: How much was the offer exactly? The mentioned 25% for the whole team incl. expenses?

62. [Arne Moll](#) on July 29th, 2010 08:11

@David. I sympathize with your points about the money (after all, nobody forces anyone to call himself 'professional', meaning a chess player who is a 'pro' doesn't automatically have more rights than a chess player who isn't) but what do you think of Naiditsch's complaints about the incompetence and even laziness of his federation? It seems to me his main complaint is not the fact that there is no money, but that no effort is done to raise it, and even if it is there, it is not going to the 'right' places. Is this something you recognize in Australia?

63. Thomas on July 29th, 2010 10:01

For context, the initial letter of Jan Gustafsson looking or begging for sponsorship ("in the name of his colleagues and supported by German federation president Robert von Weizsäcker") may be worthwhile pointing out:

<http://www.chessbase.de/nachrichten.asp?newsid=10489> (11 June 2010)

It is obviously in German, only now Naiditsch chooses to bring things to an international level I will translate some parts:

"As individual players, we (Naiditsch, Fridman, Meier and Gustafsson) aren't absolute world top. But as a team we are absolutely competitive, hence have things in common with the national football team." [hmm, chess is still an individual sport, even as a team competition]

"So far we are supported by Chessbase and 'Deutsche Schachbund Wirtschaftsdienst GmbH' [at least, Naiditsch's early statement that "the federation ... couldn't find money" is wrong, the little word 'enough' is missing]. But there lack 20.000€ to ensure the participation of the best team at this year's Olympiad. We would be extremely grateful to a savior who permits the German national team a proper preparation and the fight for the medals. [hmm, they played like a medal candidate throughout most of the Dresden Olympiad even if they sort of collapsed at the end - but this may have been an exception playing on home ground]"

My take on this: Obviously one has to "exaggerate" a bit in such a letter, but it seems that Naiditsch and colleagues overestimate their market value – case in point: no additional sponsors could be found. How does the proposed Olympiad appearance fee (once again, it wasn't zero) compare to similar players in similar countries? How did Naiditsch's appearance fee in Dortmund compare to what the higher-rated players got?

Naiditsch may still have valid points, but so does HaroldChasen – maybe both went a bit over the top, this happens in such discussions.

64. Thomas on July 29th, 2010 10:11

As a late response to Daniel: It depends on how you define "paradise". Germany still has many tournament opportunities (and titled players seem to get conditions at Swiss opens) and a strong and financially attractive team competition, the Bundesliga (there is even some money in lower leagues).

True, one could argue that the Bundesliga also caters to foreign mercenaries, but this also leads to

- international media attention for the competition
- German players getting the chance to play strong foreign opponents, and indeed to score title norms

Hence, even if some things go wrong in the federation, paradise doesn't suddenly turn into hell

What would paradise be? Maybe Armenia where at least some GMs get state scholarships as a stable source of income. But

- 1) They earn such privileges and/or return the favor with consistently good results in team events
- 2) Chess is very popular in Armenia, much more than in either Germany or the USA. You and others may regret this, dream about how this needs to change, or accept it as a given.

65. PJ Costello on July 29th, 2010 10:15

@ Peggy Sue

Let's begin with your unwillingness to use your real name. Arkadij wrote this letter without pulling any punches and signed his name to it for all the world to see. So, on this first point, the outcome is the same as many of your chess encounters with him, I suspect. You lost and lost badly. Are you still harboring feelings of animosity? Please demonstrate the same courage that he has and tell us who you really are.

Next, I've known Arkadij for nearly 5 years. He has visited my home, played chess with my children, helped my family (alot), and in every single respect proved himself to be both a caring and honorable friend. Most importantly here, he has nothing to gain from me at all. He is a friend, plain and simple. So your (completely false) accusation that he cares only about himself is laid bare for the nonsense it is. He has every right to pursue happiness (profit or other) and every right to expose those who aren't living up to their responsibilities, especially since those failures have a derogatory effect on both his career and those of his colleagues.

Now, this statement from you:

"BTW, anyone of the people celebrating him now remember that he was caught cheating in an internet tournament?"

This statement exposes your real intentions, doesn't it? You are interested only in trying to hurt the man. You are not interested in any kind of justice; not for the players, not for the federation, and most certainly not for the game. But you fail again and here's why.

Every single person reading this has a ghost of some kind in their closet. This includes you...the person hiding behind Internet anonymity. And it includes me. Arkadij was a very young player that had the feeling he was being cheated in the same fashion and he responded with a knee-jerk reaction, which young

men frequently do. He has expressed his regret for the incident and those who really know him also know it won't happen again. He has proven his capabilities many times by defeating many top players. His competence as a strong GM is not now and has never been in question by any serious source. Nor are his present-day scruples. So what exactly is the point in bringing this up? Is it really the best you can do?

You must be the offspring of one of the German Federation's officials.

66. jshandl on July 29th, 2010 10:43

It is easy to blame the German federation for not finding a sponsor, but I don't see an economic reason why a company should sponsor a national team competition. It receives little if any public interest and the players are normally only known to a smaller circle of more ambitious players. The German chess federation may have 100000 active members but I'm quite sure not more than some 1-2 percents know the members of the current A-team and follow the competition. And Mr Naiditsch in particular has not a very wide-spread fan-base. Mr Naiditsch might consider, that there is merely not enough public support for a national team competition on a professional base.

67. Mikamesch on July 29th, 2010 11:57

I am simply an amateur player, but i enjoy watching high class chess tournaments. So for me, and probably a big amount of other German chess fans, it is a real pity, that the German A-Team won't be going to participate in this year's chess olympics.

I'd also like to express my best wishes to Mr. Naiditsch and the A-Team. I appreciate the efforts, how small they might be, to find sponsors. I imagine it to be a tough task. But it is also an attempt to relax the situation, by raising alternative fundings.

The situation as a whole is really bad and i hope in future times it is going to relax and that the persons addressed in Mr. Naiditsch's open letter will be able to deal with the criticism expressed in a way that improvement can happen. They really should take this issue seriously, for the well being of German chess in future.

68. rivaldo on July 29th, 2010 12:46

the A-Team never was on good terms with the authorities. they broke free and served as a paralegal/military group, that could be hired.

I guess these 4 watched a little too much TV and now are striving to emulate their idols.

so who's najditsch?

I vote for B.A. Baracus.

69. Peggy Sue on July 29th, 2010 13:44

@PJCostello

“You lost and lost badly. Are you still harboring feelings of animosity?”

My score against him is quite OK; 1-1 in normal games, maybe slightly in his favor in rapid, but that’s not the point. The point is that I’ve known him even back then to go to any length to win within and outside the rules.

“His competence as a strong GM is not now and has never been in question by any serious source.”

I don’t deny that he is a very strong player, but that doesn’t give him the right to disgrace anyone publicly.

I won’t comment anything else you wrote, you can call me a coward, which is probably right 😊 And of course you can idolize Mr Naiditsch as much as you want.

70. deeppink on July 29th, 2010 14:02

Politicians are liars! All! In my country, Romania, for a turism logo they had payed 800 millions euro and same log on profesional sites costs only 100 euro. Chess federation exist in my country only with name and for collecting taxes, nothing more! Shame on all “leaders”!

71. PJ Costello on July 29th, 2010 14:21

@ Peggy Sue

“My score against him is quite OK; 1-1 in normal games, maybe slightly in his favor in rapid, but that’s not the point.”

If that’s not the point or doesn’t have any particular relevance, then why did you bring it up?

“The point is that I’ve known him even back then to go to any length to win within and outside the rules.”

And yet you can only site one example, and even that is ancient history, widely known and for which he has apologized. The fact remains; you trumpet this incident for one reason and one reason only; to try and cause him harm. That doesn’t speak well of you at all.

“I don’t deny that he is a very strong player, but that doesn’t give him the right to disgrace anyone publicly.”

As long as he tells the truth he does indeed have the right. Some may argue he may even have a responsibility to expose that truth. How would you feel if you discovered you would be paid less in your profession while the decision makers were enjoying lavish meals and/or lifestyles, all the while making little or no effort to improve the conditions they were charged with protecting? That is precisely what is happening here and Arkadij et al have every good reason to go public with it. Keeping it private means maintaining the unproductive status quo. Now, for better or for worse, the pressure is on.

“I won’t comment anything else you wrote, you can call me a coward, which is probably right ”

More importantly, the issue of your credibility is at stake. If you truly believe what you say and feel, then why hide? What are you afraid of? And why should anyone believe you?

“And of course you can idolize Mr Naiditsch as much as you want.”

I’m sure those who know me would laugh at the idea of me idolizing anyone...or anything. As I said, he is a friend and has proven his dedication without expectation of anything in return, which is contrary to the image of him you are attempting to portray on this forum.

72. Vandros on July 29th, 2010 14:22

I think his comments are pretty harsh, and quite unreasonably. Maybe he is right in general about the situation in Germany with regard to money for chess players; but that is a fact with which players have to deal generally and come at a conclusion for themselves.

73. Septimus on July 29th, 2010 15:13

@Ron,

“Playing for your country is an honour, its a disgrace that Naiditsch and others are always complaining about money.”

I have to disagree here. Chess is so competitive these days that unless you are a super-talent, you won’t get anywhere playing part-time. Chess is a profession for many of the top GMs and the government should support them by at least covering their tournament fees etc. Expecting a salary may be unrealistic, but basic costs should be covered.

The bigger question is, where is all the money generated through membership fees/subscriptions going? According to the article, the office-bearers are frittering it away on personal expenses. That right there demands a lead-pipe to the knee-cap. Somebody make me the President of something and I’ll show you how to kick some serious ass...:)

74. [Michael](#) on July 29th, 2010 15:28

I believe our main problem in Germany is that we have people in important functions (not only in chess, but also in “real” politics!) who are not at all qualified for their job. Take Mr. von Weizsäcker for instance. He said from the very beginning that he would have very little time for the job as president of the federation. Then why was he elected at all? Well, he’s the son of a former German President – but what does this have to with chess? Curiously enough, he does seem to have loads of time to play plenty of correspondence chess on the highest level...

The qualifications of Mr. Deventer are equally unclear. As was also pointed out by Georg Meier, he doesn't have any connections to professional chess. He can't understand their interests and desires because he lacks any experience in this area. Again, why was he elected? Don't we have any more competent candidates in the whole wide country? It's a mystery...

75. [ejh](#) on July 29th, 2010 16:19

domino writes above:

"You can add England to the list of countries with incompetent and corrupt Federation officials."

Who, please, are the "corrupt" Federation officials in England?

In what way is it acceptable to call people "corrupt" without either saying who you are or who they are?

76. Curious on July 29th, 2010 16:22

Does anybody know the situation in other (mainly european) countries?

What about financial support of chess players in Russia, Ukraine, France etc...??

When WORLD top grandmasters like Karjakin have to change their nationality to get more support, it says a lot.

This means even countries with elite grandmasters of the world dont have enough money for supporting their chess stars; no reason for players from "smaller" nations suddenly to start crying.

<http://www.chessvibes.com/reports/sergei-karjakin-i-need-to-train-with-good-coaches/>

77. Mike on July 29th, 2010 17:44

Chess is an activity which teaches people to think independently, to question the ways by which the things happen. The problem is that the general business and media controllers want to promote just activities which deal with our primitive sexual and violence instincts, an irrational way to pass subliminal consumption and mind manipulation messages. For these purposes, FIFA and Hollywood do their best...It's all about "Panes and Circus"

78. Mike on July 29th, 2010 17:47

In other words, chess is no good for political and commercial mind control. That's why chess federations tend to be like fake horror circus...

79. Thomas on July 29th, 2010 18:02

@Michael: Maybe you are a bit unfair towards Weizsäcker. It is not the first time that his name and family is rather held against him. It should be a “plus” that he is a correspondence chess player himself. And it’s arguably also a plus that he still has a professional life outside of chess, be it only because he doesn’t require a salary from the federation.

It is also interesting to “revisit” an interview with Naiditsch in “Schach” 12-2008/1-2009 right after the Dresden Olympiad. First, he is very critical of Deventer, eventually saying “Many players keep their mouth shut about all this, but I do not depend on the German chess federation in any way”. Then, eventually about Weizsäcker:

“I would have liked to have a second opening coach besides Christopher Lutz from the very beginning. He worked really well but it was simply too much for him (“er war einfach überfordert”). Then Landa should come but wasn’t available. Then came Döttling. A big praise for Mr. Weizsäcker who made this possible. We are really very lucky with our president. He likes chess! ... Mr. Weizsäcker is a big luck for German chess. He tries to represent chess well to the outside world. (“Er fiebert mit, er ist wirklich dabei.” – can’t translate this properly)”

Indeed, in his open letter Naiditsch writes “Up to that point my opinion of our President was quite positive” – and this suddenly changed with the letter dated 29th June.

From Weizsäcker’s point of view:

- He had to communicate the official point of view of the federation, and at least tried to be polite and “not to close all doors”.
- He also has to think about the entire federation, including thousands of amateurs paying membership dues. At least some of them may not understand if players who refuse to play at the Olympiad continue to receive – albeit limited – support from the federation?

If Naiditsch really wants to hurt Weizsäcker’s campaign for ECU president, will Danailov reward him with a MTel invitation?? This would be a big surprise, to say the least

80. Bartleby on July 29th, 2010 18:57

The tone of Weizsäcker’s letter is in another way as inappropriate as Naiditsch’s personal attacks. The businesslike threats complete with deadline sound like an attorney. He is the president communicating with his best players. Shouldn’t there be a personal level to talk with each other, despite differences about money?

81. ChessGirl on July 29th, 2010 19:46

@Curious

From what I’ve heard, Russia tends to support chess players quite a lot. Some players get free rented flats, there are also the coaches, like Karjakin now training with Dokhoyan. OK, the money this year doesn’t look that promising,

but that I know of they are frequently offered paid team training sessions with coaches, for both the male and female team, before the Olympics.

Nothing of the sort is offered in Ukraine, at least not up to now. The best Ukrainian chess players receive some ridiculous salary from the Federation (say 200 USD a month), no coaches, sometimes they had to travel at 4am to cut off flight expenses, and, contrary to what they expected, conditions were not improved at all after winning the olympic gold in 2004. Hopefully things will improve now with new President Kapustin, he's certainly showing good intentions, which is a first step.

82. Peggy Sue on July 30th, 2010 03:54

@PJCostello

Why do you complain that I don't tell my surname here? The site's admins don't ask for it and scrolling through the posts almost nobody tells his/her full name (you included by the way, but don't bother, I don't really want to know). My reason not to tell it anywhere on the Internet is that I want to go to tournaments to just enjoy playing chess without being bugged about anything I post here or on other forums.

About Mr Naiditsch everything has been said, I respect your point of view, despite heartily disagreeing with it.

83. PJ Costello on July 30th, 2010 05:13

@ Peggy Sue

"Why do you complain that I don't tell my surname here?"

Because you launched a mean-spirited attack against a public figure that did not attempt to hide his identity when pointing out the flaws (if not corruption) of the German Chess Federation. You attacked his character and motivation, claiming that you know him to support that position, when chances are you really don't know him at all. If you are telling the truth then you shouldn't be afraid to face the music...or other players at tournaments.

"About Mr Naiditsch everything has been said, I respect your point of view, despite heartily disagreeing with it."

This is fine. I respect your right to be wrong.

"The site's admins don't ask for it and scrolling through the posts almost nobody tells his/her full name."

They don't level the charges you did either...and if they did I would say the same thing to them.

84. Jack Fletcher on July 30th, 2010 06:55

This has exposed the hypocrisy of European or Western chess. We have always been complaining about African and other third world federations sucking up to FIDE, mismanagement in third world chess and so on. But now it appears things are no different in First World Chess administrations. Germany, Belgium, Poland...the discussions here are opening up a whole can of worms.

85. Thomas on July 30th, 2010 09:20

@Bartleby: You have a point, but there are still differences between the two letters: To me it seems that Weizsäcker
- was struggling to find the right words, even if he didn't succeed. The deadline was necessary unless he was prepared to decide "no A-team = no team at all". The federation couldn't approach substitutes just a day or so before the FIDE deadline, nor could it offer them "conditional spots" which become void if there is still a solution or compromise with the A-team?
- didn't enjoy writing that letter
In this context, Naiditsch's enthusiastic words about Weizsäcker from not too long ago seem worthwhile mentioning?

By comparison, even if Naiditsch doesn't enjoy the situation, it seems that he (sort of) enjoyed writing his open letter.

All I want to say is that the whole story isn't a matter of black (federation) and white (Naiditsch and colleagues, though it's unclear whether they were aware of, and support his drastic letter). There are shades of grey on both sides – indeed that's how your post can also be interpreted!?

86. [Michael](#) on July 30th, 2010 13:45

@ Thomas: Why am I "a bit unfair towards Weizsäcker"? He might be an enthusiastic chess fan, but this is not enough. He simply doesn't have the time to deal with important things properly. Some weeks ago Jan Gustafsson suggested a meeting to sort out the mess. Nice idea, he was told, but the president is busy until autumn and isn't available neither by phone nor e-mail. This is ridiculous.

87. Eiae on July 30th, 2010 15:08

I think it's a silly letter. The German fed should just give the spots to other more willing players that see the olympics as an excellent opportunity to promote themselves as great chess players.

The tone of the letter is in itself an outrage.

88. [Colin McGourty](#) on July 30th, 2010 15:45

On the situation in Poland: I'm currently translating an interview with Tomasz Sielicki, the President of the Polish Chess Federation, which is going to be published in the next issue of the magazine where Wojtaszek's interview appeared (it's partly a response). Although almost everyone seems to agree that things were very bad until a year ago, it does genuinely look as though

the new men in charge of the PCF are making improvements. Wojtaszek's been a little "out of the loop" while working with Anand.

89.eric lobron on July 30th, 2010 18:56

Arkadij's letter has catapulted me through a time tunnel into my own, active days. Basically nothing seems to have changed, when it comes to the incompetence of the federation to raise decent appearance fees for their top players. In 'my days', I could only look at other western countries full of envy, compared to us most other teams had conditions we could only dream about. One difference between the times does exist, though. In contrast to the 'new' generation we did not have to deal with a coach who's apprenticeship after the downfall of the wall was accomplished under the guiding of the biggest fraudsters in German chess history, Dr. Jellissen, who cheated most of the German grandmasters out of considerable amounts of their personal wealth (not me, always mistrusted that guy thanks to great instincts of my ex-wife). Some other German 'big wigs' went to the same school, and court cases have afterwards become part of their daily routine.

Mr. Boensch didn't even have the class to contact me after his decision to kick me out of the team, when rating wise I should have been selected – eighteen years for Germany and not even a phone call from the coach. At least his foster-father, Dr. Jellissen, tried to have class....

Nevertheless I had a great time whenever I represented Germany, but I had to find it myself. A more professional environment before, during and after the events might have led to better results, but looking back, wouldn't I have missed out on other important things....it's only money, and it's only chess!

90.eric lobrone on July 30th, 2010 19:01

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Nevertheless I had a great time whenever I represented Germany, but I had to find it myself. A more professional environment before, during and after the events might have led to better results, but looking back, wouldn't I have

missed out on other desirable moments? After all, it's only money, and it's only chess...

91. Bartleby on July 30th, 2010 20:26

@Thomas

> There are shades of grey on both sides

Yes. I think the German Chess Federation is an organization mainly of amateur players, lead by amateur functionaries. They do a great job at the level they care about, with a deep and broad league system, and all sorts of local, regional and national competitions. The top level is not a high priority, that's not new.

On the other side, I can understand that free-lance professionals want to get paid for playing.

The two sides have to sit down, talk with each other, and see if the federation's interest to show up with a strong team, and the players' interest to earn their normal rates can be brought together. If not, a pity, but that's how it is with our federation and our professionals.

The unusual thing here is that the whole A team took the initiative, and talked to the federation. That they don't get the money they asked for is one thing. But that the president is giving them a deadline and hints at the consequences of losing future support is, hm, ridiculous, to be polite. That's where I understand Naiditsch's frustration.

92. ThunderGod on July 30th, 2010 21:53

@ejh

You simply don't get it do you? Whoever you are Mr or Mrs Anony Mouse. Mr or Mrs Double Standards. Who are you anyway "ejh"?

People in the west are fed up of federations crying that they have no money to support their players. While at the same time, somehow, miraculously, money is found for the officials so that they are able to attend FIDE meetings and so forth and claim expenses to do their job.

Is it not a clear case of cart before the horse?

What about the chess players Mr/Mrs Anony Mouse!

Are you saying the the English Chess Federation has made funds available for all of it's top players? Are you saying that no external money was needed to pay the fees for grandmasters like Michael Adams to play in the British Championships 2010? Speak now Anony Mouse! Was it the English Chess Federation who found this money for their most important event of the year?

Thankfully this website guarantees freedom of speech.

Other websites and forums do not.

They insist on making sure that the 'pecking order' is maintained. They do this by of course insisting on using 'real names'. Disgusting abuse of power. At such places nobody unless they have a card of influence, is allowed to speak or comment above their station without fear of reprisal.

Since when at 'Speakers Corner' was it obligatory to declare your name before climbing on a soap box and freely addressing the public.

Never!!!

That is the very point of democracy and freedom!!

Down with you oppressionists!

On those other websites and forums, the pack wolves, the cream and the elite, would turn savagely on anyone who would dare suggest that things are not right.

I raise a battle cry for those who want the best for chess players!

Thor

93. Thor on July 31st, 2010 01:37

Arne

It's very disappointing that you have chosen to censor a post supporting the cause of chess players in the west. Why?

Thor

94. Thomas on July 31st, 2010 11:48

@Bartleby: Well said, I agree with everything but part of your last paragraph – while I also understand Naiditsch's frustration. The general issue may be:

1) Should amateurs (with their membership fees), let alone "the tax payer" support – let's face it – world subtop players because they otherwise struggle to make a living from chess? I wrote before that Weizsäcker's threat to cancel future support has to be seen in that context. And would it have been preferable not to mention such consequences but impose them anyway? BTW, that decision apparently wasn't Weizsäcker's, he merely supports the Top Sport Commission (could he overrule them?). Regarding the deadline, I repeat that Weizsäcker had to impose a deadline because FIDE imposed a deadline.

2) Can private or corporate sponsors fill the gap? There are some rich ones around, the issue is how they spend their money. For example, Wolfgang Grenke rather generously supports his Baden-Baden Bundesliga team – which

includes world top players Anand, Carlsen, Shirov and Svidler but also most of the German A-team (Naiditsch, Gustafsson, next season also Meier). He also does, or did contribute a lot to the Mainz rapid event. 10 or 20,000 Euros – reportedly the missing amount to secure participation of a German A-team at the Olympiad – might be “peanuts” for him

As I mentioned the Bundesliga, next season it will have a couple more rising stars:

<http://www.schachbundesliga.de/magazin/artikel.php?artikel=4087&type=2&menuid=82&topmenu=13>

Le Quang Liem and Richard Rapport for Bremen, Nils Grandelius for Emsdetten, David Howell for Trier (he will probably play board 1). On the other hand, Baden-Baden drops Caruana (who hardly played last season) for Georg Meier. Other losses (who may have become too expensive?) are Mamedyarov and Kasimdzhanov.

95. Kevin O'Connell on July 31st, 2010 16:02

Re ThunderGod's comments.

Typical. Anonymous claptrap bemoaning all sorts of things, not to mention criticising others for being anonymous, then continuing to attack federation officials for getting expenses to attend FIDE Congresses.

ThunderGod conveniently overlooks all those officials (like so many players, from so many countries) who pay all or most of their own expenses for the “pleasure” of trying to develop chess. Is it any wonder that many small federations are finding it harder and harder to find the volunteers who will put in their own time and money for such a thankless task?

Generally speaking, of course, you get what you pay for, so I hope the days of volunteer officials are over. Federations need to become professional and that means paid staff.

Kevin O'Connell

Irish FIDE Delegate 1977/8-2010

(About 20 FIDE Congresses attended – travel grant one year and free accommodation at Turin 2006 and Yerevan 1996 – see below, otherwise expenses received = 0 – at least players and team captains have not had to pay for their food and accommodation during Olympiads – I was both in the 1998 Olympiad, when I also got a grant “towards” travel costs – about half if I remember well)

President FIDE Zone 1 (W. Europe) 1978-2004

(expenses received = 0)

Chairman FIDE Qualification 1990-1994

(expenses received = 0)

Chairman FIDE Titles & Ratings Commission 1994-2002/3

(expenses received = 0*)

(* unless you count travel, free accommodation and a small fee for acting as Chairman of Appeals Committee at the 1996 Olympiad).

etc., etc.

PS. I'm not complaining about the support I have received from my federation – if there are no funds in the piggy bank, there's no point smashing it open.

96. [Colin McGourty](#) on July 31st, 2010 16:39

Here's the interview with the President of the Polish Chess Federation where, among other things, he responds to Wojtaszek's criticism:
<http://www.chessintranslation.com/2010/07/the-polish-chess-federation-responds/>

97. David on July 31st, 2010 17:51

Why is this letter not published in Chessbase website? Was it not sent there or they refused to publish it?

98. Bartleby on July 31st, 2010 21:54

Can we swap presidents? That's the kind of talk I would have liked to hear from Weizsäcker.

99. test on August 1st, 2010 00:47

>> *Why is this letter not published in Chessbase website?*

Interesting question. (It's not even on the German page.)
They have published numerous (scandalous) open letters before.

100. Vandro on August 1st, 2010 11:49

>> Why is this letter not published in Chessbase website?

Maybe it was written by a ghost writer in the name of Naiditsch who provided the main ideas.....

101. Thomas on August 1st, 2010 14:27

As far as I understand, Chessbase was willing to sponsor the German A-team – even if they were unwilling or unable to provide enough money. In that case, the webpage of a (potential) sponsor may not be the right place for submitting an open letter complaining about insufficient sponsorship.

Before its (further) controversial content, Naiditsch's open letter seems to start with a lie or, at least, an inaccuracy or misleading statement: "the biggest chess federation in Europe ... couldn't manage to find money to pay the players" – at face value this may be wrong as (repeating myself) the little word 'enough' is missing.

102. ops on August 1st, 2010 21:50

many chess players would like to play there without any payed money.

103. Elvis on August 2nd, 2010 00:45

Dear Mr. Naiditsch,

Unfortunately, you have chosen to make a “career” out of a boardgame that has relatively little popular interest. If your interest were financial well-being, this was an extremely poor decision and your finances will be impacted accordingly.

Though you are persuasive that many German chess bureaucrats have enriched themselves a bit at the expense of the German Chess Federation treasury, your apparent impression that this money is due to ‘professional’ German chessplayers is misguided.

Choose whether or not to play for the conditions offered and then get on with your life. Your ad hominem attacks and ugly comments are unbecoming and are very shortsighted. In the long run such a low level of discourse can only hurt your prospects for sponsorship in the future. They appear childish and presumptuous.

Once again, if financial reward is your goal, it might be worthwhile to consider a career other than playing a boardgame.

104. Fabian L. on August 2nd, 2010 08:41

I can understand him completely! I am a untalented average chess player in a small chess club in Germany and we have to pay much money year by year to the official german chess organisations. But who gets the money and – probably the main question – for what? If you want s.th. , nobody can be contacted, if you will manage a championship, nobody helps you. But the fees, to be a member are – in my opinion of course – extraordinary. And then it is a shame, that the best german chess players can not be assisted by the german chess associaton.

If you understand German, you can get an accurate comment by GM Jörg Hickl:

<http://www.schach-welt.de/blog/viewpost/245.html>

105. kees on August 2nd, 2010 13:29

@Elvis. your patronizing post makes me sick.

106. Suzette Myers on August 2nd, 2010 19:34

The German A Team deserves moral and financial support from their national chess federation which exists to support an A Team. The German chess federation should honor their country enough to make sure their country is represented by their top players at the Olympiad and other top tournaments around the world. If Germany cannot send it's top players to the Olympiad,

then there is no need for a national chess federation at all.
Bravo to Mr. Arkadij Naiditsch for his courage to expose his national federation, to name names and to open this dialogue.
As chess players what can we do to solve this for all top players everywhere?

107. Peggy Sue on August 3rd, 2010 04:36

@Suzette Myers

“... national chess federation which exists to support an A Team.”

According to the German rating database the federation has about 236000 members, but the only point is to support the top 4 (or 10, 20, 100) players??? Let's be generous and say the Top 1000 players. That means 235000 players don't matter?

The longer I think about it, the national team shouldn't get any money apart from travel-expenses and maybe a little pocket-money. Just suppose the “A-team” played in the Olympics and achieved a 3rd place (a bit optimistic but for the sake of argument), would it really benefit anyone ... any operative of the federation, any German (non A-team) chess-player? I don't think so, the participating players would maybe profit, because a successful participation might increase their market value.

The federation exists to ensure the possibility of competitive chess for everyone, not to encourage a minority's greed.

108. kees on August 3rd, 2010 15:35

@Peggy

Greed? They are trying to make a living.

If they perform well there will be media attention for chess so that the German federation could use the opportunity to popularise chess.

Your club game doesn't attract media attention.

109. ThunderGod on August 4th, 2010 01:07

Corrupt? What? Definition??

[14th century. Latin corruptus, past participle of corrumpere 'break completely'. rumpere 'to break']

It is simply as defined. Nothing more. The whole system of governing or organising bodies seems to be broken.

Why? Wait a moment... Does Kevin O' Connell also not get the point?

He appears to exemplify himself as a model of virtue, although why I have no idea? Nobody appears to have called into question his or anyone else's (for that matter) personal status?! Hope his conscience is not twitching. Bizarre response if you ask me.

And more to the point, and like a typical politician, he conveniently sidesteps the actual question raised by Domino...

So what is the purpose of organising bodies, committees, federations, or whatever else you want to call them? Surely the whole point of these is to facilitate better chess?

And yet we see that this is not the case. We see the FACTS that teams, championships and player support is in a mess, they are unsupported or not fully so.

And yet still we see people being busy, going to places, holding meetings, discussing things, passing motions, and then what exactly?

Whether all of this is paid for by individuals like Kevin O' Connell or not. For what purpose is it all exactly?

Surely it serves no purpose. And therefore all cents incurred in doing so must instead be fed back to learning and playing the game of chess itself!

Kevin O' Connell may have paid a lot of money himself – who has disputed that? Or indeed many others like him! In fact surely WE ALL put in time and effort for chess for free (or very little reward)! That is not the issue!!

What is the issue is that chess itself does not benefit. Events and players are not (or very little) contributed to or paid for.

While on the other hand nobody can surely say that these organisational meetings in x or y hotel is completely free? No way! No hotel gives away these things for free. Someone or some body is paying!

And yet even though these trips and/or meetings are paid (or in part) by individuals like Kevin O' Connell, players are still no better supported. Then what is the point?

What is the point at all of having people who 'organise' or 'promote' the game of chess. Since evidently they do not if players cannot play in important events??!!

Surely it would be much better for people like Kevin O'Connell to instead just donate their money to players and not bother to attend any meetings.

Now back to whether or not organisations are totally without blemish or criticism...

This was posted publicly less than a year ago on Chess NE1 "Gerry losing this position as FIDE rep (he stood down as President) will be a big blow to him but the plain thruth is that he has presided over a worsening position for some time and has failed to provide the leadership required. In many ways he demonstrated a big gulf between those who can run/organise a chess event very well and those with the business nounce required to succeed in these difficult times."

This "plain truth" is clearly very harsh words about a national president.

And this about 18 months ago:

“To describe this serial junket-junkie as a useless tub of lard, would be to flatter him immensely. England does not need an official whose sole raison d’être is to be “nice” to everyone, however dishonest and shady they are, so that he may earn invitations to appear at various events in the company of his mother and feel important.”

“When I said that he had never made a pronouncement on any issue of substance, I meant it. Does he stand for anything apart from himself? Where was he when that lying, head-butting, move-retracting, Georgian ***** dragged me before the FIDE Ethics Commission? Nowhere to be seen. He might have forfeited a junket or two had he taken a stance. He is an utter disgrace to British chess who has more than overstayed his welcome as President. If he had any decency, he would stand down forthwith.” and “The ECF’s interests are not served by a representative whose guiding principle is never do anything that may jeopardise his junketing.” published on Atticus Chess Forum

Evidently very harsh accusations. So has anyone challenged these words? Has anyone tried to say that they do not imply that anything is “corrupt”. Clearly not ejh or Kevin O’Connell. Where were you then to defend against them?

In fact have these public statements ever been challenged by anyone?

If not then are people saying that all national organisations are squeaky clean? Are people saying that every single cent of an organisation is never spent on room hire for meetings, travel expenses, salaries, etc? That every cent of all the money is solely spent on the game of chess, learning or playing? If yes then simple – provide proof!

Otherwise the current facts that people will notice is that the German team has lost out to play at the Olympiad and that fewer GMs have received fees to play at the British.

And yet we see that people want to squash opinion here. Where otherwise they have no voice on any other platform due to the inhibition policies elsewhere to quell public debate!

And on that point, whereas 100 years ago the written word was rare. Most debate was vocal. These days it is the reverse. Most debate and talk is written, online, on the internet or by text or email. Move on with the times! Therefore opinion must be allowed in public debate in all it’s forms to be in writing without calling in heavy handed tactics like ‘influential moderating’ and ‘law suits’. Written discourse must reflect modern reality!

And have there been any other comments made on other forums that appear to have been overlooked (are the above examples of this?) which should also be moderated – that is if all things are to be equal.

Even if you are a Professor and you make a very valid point for example about putting some money into internet and IT for a 'modern' British Championships, the professor gets ruthlessly and inexcusably shot down in flames, and yet just a few days later a few other people make EXACTLY the same point but nobody criticises!? Wow! How very odd people are!?

This was all a test. QED.

Thor

110. steinitz on August 4th, 2010 07:06

<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/c5538V/3494863/Wegen-10000-Euro.html>
the german sueddeutsche liked the story.

111. Thomas on August 5th, 2010 10:46

German Chessbase has an interview with Daniel Fridman, another player from the A-team:

<http://www.chessbase.de/nachrichten.asp?newsid=10703>

So they are willing to discuss the topic (they also link to the newspaper article steinitz mentioned), but either they were considered the tone of Naiditsch's open letter or Naiditsch himself chose a non-German outlet (the letter now also appeared at Chessdom).

The Fridman interview is in German and too long to translate, just a few points:

- One issue was that the A players collectively asked for a meeting with the federation and never got one ("only emails and phone calls").
- "If I were an engineer or programmer and still had the chance to travel to the Olympiad, I would also pay myself [referring to other teams, the Australian one would be an example] to play without any competitive pressure. But I am a (chess) professional and things are different in Germany. ... There are expectations for the German team, maybe not top 3 but maybe top 10 final ranking. ... At a team competition such as the Olympiad one always has to give 120 percent."
- Quite a lot about what a trainer should do and how this is handled by other federations. Funny "detail": Jan Gustafsson will actually travel to the Olympiad, now as second and coach of the Danish team.

Interview mit Daniel Fridman

04.08.2010 - Der Rückzug der vier deutschen A-Spieler Naiditsch, Gustafsson, Meier und Fridman von der kommenden Schacholympiade wird derzeit viel diskutiert. Daniel Fridman hat in einem Interview mit Johannes Fischer nun ausführlich alle Beweggründe für den Schritt der Spieler dargelegt. Dabei geht es den deutschen Spitzenspielern nicht nur um das Antrittsgeld für dieses Turnier, sondern auch um die

Unterstützung des Verbandes für seine Top-Spieler generell. Neben Zuschüssen für Turniere und geeigneten Trainingsmaßnahmen fehlt es auch an Turnieren selbst. So wird die Deutsche Meisterschaft als Amateuropen durchgeführt und wurde in diesem Jahr unglücklicherweise noch auf den gleichen Termin wie die Europameisterschaft gelegt. Schon nach der Schacholympiade in Dresden hatten die Spieler das Gespräch gesucht, wären aber beim DSB auf taube Ohren gestoßen. Immer mehr junge Spieler würden wegen des Mangels an Unterstützung frühzeitig Alternativen zu einer möglichen Karriere als Schachprofi suchen. Fridman meint aber, dass starke deutsche Spieler mit Erfolgen bei internationalen Einzel- oder Mannschaftsmeisterschaften auch für die Mitgliederentwicklung des Deutschen Schachbundes einen durchaus positiven Einfluss ausüben.

Es geht um mehr als nur Geld

Ein Gespräch mit Daniel Fridman über die Nationalmannschaft, die Olympiade und Spitzenschach in Deutschland

Lieber Daniel Fridman. Du bist Nummer 3 der deutschen Rangliste, wurdest 2008 deutscher Meister und gehörst zu den vier Spielern, die für die Schacholympiade 2010 nominiert wurden, jedoch nach gescheiterten Honorarverhandlungen mit dem Deutschen Schachbund nicht spielen wollen. Jetzt ist eine Situation entstanden, die für alle Seiten unbefriedigend ist: Die Spieler können nicht bei der Olympiade spielen, der DSB nominiert eine Mannschaft, deren Brett 1 die Nummer 14 der deutschen Rangliste und deren Brett fünf die Nummer 80 der deutschen Rangliste ist. Der Imageschaden für den Spieler und den DSB ist groß. Hätte man das nicht verhindern können?

Vielleicht. Aber hier geht es nicht nur um das Honorar für diese Olympiade. Es muss sich grundsätzlich etwas ändern. Und die Weigerung der Mannschaft, zur Schacholympiade nach Khanty-Mansiysk zu fahren, kam nicht wie ein Blitz aus heiterem Himmel, sondern hat eine lange Vorgeschichte. Ich spiele erst seit drei Jahren für die deutsche Nationalmannschaft, aber wie ich gehört habe, sind die Honorare seit 1990 gleich geblieben. Schon nach der Mannschaftseuropameisterschaft im Oktober 2009 in Novi Sad, wo die Bezahlung ganz schlecht war, haben wir gesagt, es muss sich etwas ändern. Aber der Deutsche Schachbund hat nicht reagiert und reagiert nicht.

Bei der Europameisterschaft haben wir gut gespielt und sind Fünfter geworden. Dennoch wollte man uns für die Olympiade in Khanty-Mansiysk erst weniger zahlen als bei der Schacholympiade in Dresden, dann hat man uns das gleiche Honorar wie in Dresden angeboten und das war nicht akzeptabel.

Wir würden alle sehr gerne bei der Olympiade spielen, aber wenn wir weiter für die gleichen Konditionen spielen, dann denkt sich der DSB, „alles in Ordnung, wir machen weiter so“. Wenn alle Angebote und jede Kritik ignoriert wird, dann ändert sich nichts. So ist uns leider nichts anderes übrig geblieben, als das „Gegenangebot“ des DSB abzulehnen.

Wenn ich Jan Gustafssons Artikel in der aktuellen Ausgabe der Zeitschrift *Schach* richtig verstanden habe, dann gab es bei dem Streit um die Honorare niemals ein richtiges Gespräch mit dem DSB?

Ja das stimmt. Wir haben einen Brief geschrieben und um ein Gespräch gebeten, aber die Bitte um ein Gespräch blieb ohne Antwort. Warum das so ist, weiß ich nicht. Vielleicht hatte der DSB nichts zu sagen oder wollte nichts sagen, keine Ahnung. Danach gab es nur Emails und Telefonate.

Viele Schachspieler sagen, an einer Schacholympiade teilzunehmen ist ein einmaliges Erlebnis und sie würden gerne mehr als nur Reisekosten zahlen, um diese Chance zu bekommen. Da fragt man sich: „Warum die Debatte ums Geld?“ Warum sagen die Spieler nicht: „Die Olympiade ist ein Superturnier, ich spiele gerne für Deutschland, die Olympiade steigert meinen Marktwert, ich spiele auch ohne Honorar“?

Ich spiele tatsächlich gerne für Deutschland und natürlich ist die Olympiade ein sehr interessantes, spannendes und attraktives Turnier. Man trifft viele Freunde, die Atmosphäre ist schön. Aber man muss unterscheiden. Es gibt Mannschaften, die nicht so stark sind und die nicht unter Erfolgsdruck stehen. Die Spieler dieser Mannschaften fahren zur Olympiade, um ein schönes Turnier zu spielen, fast so, als ob sie Urlaub machen würden. Aber das sind dann auch Ferien. Wenn ich Ingenieur oder Programmierer wäre, und trotzdem die Gelegenheit hätte, zur Olympiade zu fahren, dann würde ich auch zahlen, um ganz ohne Erfolgsdruck bei der Olympiade mitzuspielen.

Aber ich bin Profi und in Deutschland liegen die Dinge anders. Deutschland ist eine der stärksten Schachnationen, der Deutsche Schachbund ist eine der mitgliederstärksten Schachverbände und nur Russland hat mehr Großmeister, Internationale Meister und Titelträger als Deutschland. An die deutsche Mannschaft werden Erwartungen geknüpft. Vielleicht nicht unter die ersten drei zu kommen, aber vielleicht doch unter die ersten zehn. Das ist schwer. Die Olympiade ist ein hartes Turnier. Man spielt zwei Wochen, man hat gute Gegner. Und ein Mannschaftsturnier ist etwas anderes als ein Open. In einem Open kann man sagen, okay, es hat nicht geklappt, aber in einem Mannschaftsturnier wie der Olympiade muss man die ganze Zeit 120 Prozent geben. Im Open spielt man für sich selbst, bei der Olympiade spielt man für die Mannschaft. Und einmal in zwei Jahren könnte bei einem solchen Turnier auch von Seiten des DSB etwas kommen.

Was den Marktwert betrifft, so steigert der sich durch die Teilnahme an einer Olympiade nicht. Zumindest habe ich das nicht erlebt.

Warum ist es wichtig für das deutsche Schach, dass Deutschland mit einer guten Mannschaft zur Olympiade fährt und dort gut abschneidet?

Für mich ist das generell wichtig, nicht nur als Schachprofi, sondern auch als Schach- und Sportfan. Ich verfolge gerne Turniere und Sportveranstaltungen, und ich wäre ziemlich enttäuscht, wenn Deutschland eine zweit- oder drittklassige Handballmannschaft zu großen Turnieren oder zur Olympiade schickt – aus welchen Gründen auch immer. Ich glaube, für Schachfans ist es interessanter zu sehen, wie die deutsche Mannschaft um einen der vorderen Plätze kämpft.

Das heißt, der Deutsche Schachbund hat den deutschen Schachfans gegenüber eine Verpflichtung?

Ich würde es so empfinden.

Die Spieler verlangen vom DSB ein Honorar. Aber was bekommt der DSB für das Geld, das er zahlt, das er in die Spieler investiert?

Ich bin Schachspieler, kein Fundraising-Experte. Ich finde, der Verband müsste sich darum kümmern, Sponsoren zu finden. Ein Verband, der nicht explizit erklärt, dass er nur für

Amateure da ist, sollte einen professionellen Fundraiser haben, der Sponsoren sucht. Im DSB gibt es den entweder nicht oder er arbeitet schlecht, denn Ergebnisse sieht man nicht.

Natürlich ist das einfacher gesagt als getan, aber ich glaube, für die Nationalmannschaft sollte man Geld auftreiben können. Viele Leute sind am Schach interessiert, gerade in Deutschland, und das dürfte für Sponsoren interessant sein. Die Schachspieler müssen natürlich mitmachen, aber unsere Aufgabe ist es vor allem, gut zu spielen. Ich bitte ja auch keinen Funktionär, die Olympiade für mich zu spielen.

Ich glaube, es ist auch Aufgabe des DSB, etwas aus seiner Nationalmannschaft zu machen, Schach in Deutschland mit Hilfe der Nationalmannschaft populärer zu machen. Natürlich müssen die Nationalspieler ihren Beitrag leisten und sich z.B. für bestimmte Veranstaltungen zur Verfügung stellen, aber dazu wäre ich bereit.

Der Ruf nach einem deutschen Magnus Carlsen oder einem Boris Becker des Schachs wird eben nur dann Wirklichkeit, wenn der DSB seine Spitzenleute fördert, damit sie besser werden und jungen Spielern Vorbilder und Perspektiven aufzeigen können. Davon profitiert dann auch der DSB, u. a. mit steigenden Mitgliederzahlen etc.

Oft wird in dieser Debatte gesagt, der Deutsche Schachbund hätte gar kein Interesse am Spitzenschach und der Förderung des Spitzenschachs. Wie siehst Du das?

Diesen Eindruck habe ich auch. Ich spiele jetzt seit drei Jahren für Deutschland und die einzige Förderung, die ich bekommen habe, war eine teilweise Übernahme der Kosten für die Europameisterschaft, die ja auch ein Turnier ist, bei dem man Deutschland offiziell vertritt.

Die bittere Ironie war hier allerdings, dass die Europameisterschaft parallel zur Deutschen Meisterschaft stattfand. Das ist natürlich eine andere Geschichte, aber ich finde – und viele andere Spieler denken genauso – man sollte die Deutsche Meisterschaft als Rundenturnier austragen. Zum Beispiel mit acht Spielern, die aufgrund ihrer Elo-Zahl gesetzt werden, dazu noch vier Spieler, die sich qualifizieren. So wie es in Holland gemacht wird. Gibt es dann noch gute Preise, kommen auch starke Spieler und man hat eine richtig gute und starke Meisterschaft.

Ich weiß natürlich auch, dass man das aktuelle System nicht einfach ändern kann, weil die Landesverbände Vertreter ihres Landes schicken wollen. Aber das entwertet den Meistertitel. 2008, als ich zum DSB gewechselt bin, habe ich die Meisterschaft gewonnen und war natürlich sehr stolz. Aber viele starke Spieler haben gar nicht mitgespielt.

Natürlich ist es schön, die Deutsche Meisterschaft zu gewinnen. Aber etwas anderes wäre es, eine Deutsche Meisterschaft zu gewinnen, in der wirklich die Besten spielen, die ein richtig hartes Turnier ist, eine richtige Meisterschaft.

Generell gibt es in Deutschland nur wenig wirkliche Schachprofis. Das soll nicht heißen, dass Leute, die studieren oder arbeiten und gleichzeitig Schach spielen, nicht gut sind. Aber es gibt nur wenige Leute, die ausschließlich Schach spielen und vom Schach leben. Und ich habe nicht den Eindruck, dass in Zukunft viele dazu kommen werden.

Jetzt schickt man also eine junge Mannschaft zur Olympiade. Khenkin wurde nicht aufgestellt, aber wo sind Arik Braun und David Baramidze? Die Jugend soll gefördert werden, das ist gut und schön, und ich bin dankbar, dass ich in Lettland als Jugendlicher gefördert wurde. (Wobei ich mir dennoch mehr Förderung in Lettland gewünscht hätte, denn außer dem Training, das tatsächlich sehr gut war, gab es keine Förderung.) Aber wieso spielen junge Spieler wie Arik Braun und David Baramidze nicht? Weil sie studieren, um

dann einen Beruf zu ergreifen, der finanzielle Sicherheit bietet – was ich gut verstehen kann. Aber wäre es dann nicht besser, auch etwas für die Leute zu tun, die beim Schach bleiben, die Profis sind?

Klaus Deventer meinte in seinem offenen Brief, der DSB hofft, dass die jungen Spieler die durch unseren Rückzug entstandene Lücke schnell schließen können. Aber das ist nicht ganz so einfach, wie ich aus eigener Erfahrung sagen kann. Da können Jahre vergehen und die meisten Spieler sagen wahrscheinlich irgendwann: „Okay, jetzt muss ich einen Beruf ergreifen und mit Schach auf professionellem Niveau aufhören.“ Und selbst wenn diese Jugendspieler diese Lücke schließen, dann kann ich mir nicht vorstellen, was das ändert. Glaubt der DSB, dass sie für wenig Geld und die gleichen Konditionen weiter für den Deutschen Schachbund spielen? Über kurz oder lang wird die gleiche Situation entstehen, die jetzt entstanden ist.

Warum sind Profis für das deutsche Schach wichtig, warum braucht Deutschland Spitzenspieler?

Ich glaube, ganz genau kann diese Frage niemand beantworten. Aber warum ist Fußball so wichtig? Warum sind die Leute so begeistert davon und warum wollen sie, dass ihre Mannschaft Weltmeister wird? Spitzenspieler machen Schach einfach attraktiver und ich glaube, es ist wichtig, dass die deutschen Schachfans die beste Mannschaft sehen. Und in anderen Bereichen arbeitet auch niemand umsonst. Jeder Politiker bekommt Geld und angenommen, ein Software-Programmierer hat eine Idee für ein Programm, das Deutschland nützt und jemand kommt und sagt: „Sehr schön, mach das bitte, aber lass uns nicht über Geld streiten“, dann würde man das absurd finden.

Bei der Debatte um die Nationalmannschaft geht es auch immer wieder um Förderung und Training und um die Rolle des Bundestrainers. Was macht der Bundestrainer Uwe Bönsch?

In Deutschland ist, so weit ich es verstanden habe, der Bundestrainer für die Aufstellung der Nationalmannschaft verantwortlich. Ich finde allerdings, man sollte die Mannschaft einfach nach Spielstärke, d.h. nach Elo-Zahl nominieren. Natürlich könnte man wie in den USA noch einen Koeffizienten einbauen, mit dem Jugendlichen bei gleicher oder etwas schlechterer Elo-Zahl bessere Chancen haben. Und ich finde, wenn man sagt, man geht nicht nach Spielstärke, sondern nominiert eine andere Mannschaft mit vermeintlich größerem Potenzial und diese Mannschaft spielt schlecht, dann muss der Bundestrainer die Verantwortung übernehmen. Wie es in anderen Sportarten ja üblich ist, nicht zuletzt im Fußball.

Der Bundestrainer nominiert die Nationalmannschaften, aber was macht er noch? Wie sieht der Kontakt zwischen dem Bundestrainer und den Nationalspielern aus?

Ich würde sagen, Uwe Bönsch kümmert sich eher um technische Fragen. Visafragen oder Dopingbestimmungen, aber Schachtraining habe ich noch nicht mit ihm gemacht. Ich war einmal bei einem Vorbereitungstreffen vor der Schacholympiade in Dresden 2008, aber da hat Uwe schachlich nicht mit uns gearbeitet. Die Spieler haben sich zusammengesetzt und trainiert.

Wie machen das andere Verbände?

Ich denke, im Idealfall wird die Mannschaft von zwei Leuten betreut. Einer, der die Rolle des Mannschaftskapitäns übernimmt, der sich um technische Fragen kümmert: die Mannschaftsaufstellung rechtzeitig einreichen, sich um Probleme und Details kümmern, usw. Das sind vielleicht nur Kleinigkeiten, aber sie sind wichtig.

Daneben sollte es einen Schachtrainer geben. Natürlich arbeitet jeder Spitzenspieler eigenständig, aber zugleich braucht man Hilfe, denn die vielen Informationen, die es heutzutage gibt, kann man alleine gar nicht bewältigen. Es hilft, wenn man einen qualifizierten Trainer hat, der bereit ist, die ganze Nacht zu analysieren, um dann am nächsten Morgen Ergebnisse zu präsentieren. Das entlastet die Mannschaft bei der Vorbereitung und die Spieler können sich stärker auf die Partie konzentrieren. Die Spieler arbeiten ohnehin sehr viel, sie prüfen Analysen, sie bereiten sich vor, und deshalb ist eine solche Arbeit sehr wichtig und hilfreich. Ein solcher Trainer kostet für ein Turnier nicht mehr als ein Spieler. Wenn man sich wundert, wie ein Trainer, der schwächer als die Spieler ist, helfen kann, dann braucht man nur an Spieler wie Kasparov und Carlsen zu denken, die ohne Trainer nie so gut geworden wären. Von anderen Sportarten gar nicht zu reden.

Haben andere Verbände solche Trainer?

Hundertprozentig genau weiß ich das nicht, aber ich glaube Holland hat Chuchelov, er wird vom holländischen Schachverband bezahlt und arbeitet individuell mit einzelnen Spielern. Bei großen Mannschaftsturnieren wie der Olympiade ist er auch als Mannschaftstrainer dabei und macht die Arbeit, die ich oben beschriebene habe. Russland hat Motylev als Trainer, Dänemark arbeitet bei der nächsten Olympiade mit Jan (Gustafsson) als Sekundant und Trainer, Frankreich hat einen Trainer, wer das dieses Jahr ist, weiß ich nicht, bei der Europameisterschaft war es Lautier, davor Tregubov, Österreich hatte Ribli, der auch bei der Einzeleuropameisterschaft dabei war und auch die USA haben einen Trainer und einen Kapitän.

Natürlich weiß ich nicht, wie das jeder einzelne der etwa 160 Verbände macht, aber alle mehr oder weniger professionellen Verbände haben einen Trainer.

Ich weiß nicht, wie das bei den deutschen Mannschaften früher war, aber bei den Wettbewerben, bei denen ich dabei war, war Uwe Bönsch kein Trainer wie Chuchelov oder Ribli, sondern hatte eine andere Funktion. In Dresden hatten wir Christopher Lutz als Trainer, später, als wir gute Chancen hatten, vorne zu landen, kam noch Fabian Döttling hinzu. Bei der Europameisterschaft in Novi Sad hatten wir keinen Trainer, der sich um das Schach gekümmert hat. Uwe Bönsch war dabei, aber was das Schach betrifft, so waren die Spieler auf sich gestellt.

Wenn man die Diskussion um die Honorare und die Aufstellung der Nationalmannschaften rekapituliert – was ist da schief gegangen und wie kann man das in Zukunft vermeiden?

Zunächst einmal würde ich ein Gespräch befürworten, und nicht nur einen Austausch von Emails oder Briefen. Alle Beteiligten sollten sich zusammensetzen und miteinander reden. Ich denke, wir haben ziemlich klar gemacht, was wir vom Deutschen Schachbund wollen. Jetzt ist der DSB am Zug und muss klar sagen, ob er sich für Spitzensport interessiert oder nicht. Dann wissen alle, woran sie sind. Bis jetzt kam vom DSB nichts dergleichen. In Gesprächen wird angedeutet, dass sich der DSB eher auf die Förderung des Amateurschachs konzentriert, aber offiziell ist das nicht.

In vielen Ländern erhalten Spieler kein Geld, wenn sie zur Olympiade fahren, aber sie werden mit einem regelmäßigen Betrag gefördert. In Armenien bekommen die Spieler ein auch für deutsche Verhältnisse gutes monatliches Gehalt – allerdings ist der Präsident Armeniens auch der Präsident des Schachverbandes, das hilft. Und in einigen Ländern wie zum Beispiel der Türkei oder Island bekommt man z.B. bereits Geld, wenn man Großmeister ist oder zur Olympiadauswahl gehört.

Ich hoffe, der DSB fördert in Zukunft auch Spitzenspieler und nicht nur Jugendliche. Gelegentliches Training, Unterstützung bei einem Turnier. Wir reden hier über keine großen Beträge. In anderen Sportarten wird das so gemacht. Wenn man dort im A-Kader ist, bekommt man monatlich Geld, damit man sich voll auf seine Sportart konzentrieren kann. Das hat Vorteile. Ich muss Geld verdienen, ich bin Schachprofi. Und wenn ich zwei Turniere zur Auswahl habe, eins, das etwas schwächer ist oder bessere Konditionen bietet, aber wo ich gute Chancen habe, Geld zu gewinnen, und eins, das stärker ist, aber wo ich gegen stärkere Spieler spielen kann, dann werde ich meistens das schwächere Turnier wählen, weil ich eben Geld verdienen muss. Bekommt man Unterstützung, dann kann man sich besser darauf konzentrieren, die eigene Spielstärke zu verbessern.

Wie geht es nun weiter? Gibt es Bemühungen, das Kind, das jetzt in den Brunnen gefallen ist, wieder hinaus zu holen und es in Zukunft anders und besser zu machen oder herrscht zur Zeit Funkstille zwischen den Spielern und dem DSB?

Ich hoffe, dass es ein Gespräch gibt, in dem die augenblickliche unglückliche Situation geklärt werden kann. Dabei geht es hier nicht nur um etwas mehr Geld für eine Olympiade. Es geht um generelle Fragen: Wie steht der DSB zum Spitzenschach, wer wird wie gefördert und warum, wie werden die Nationalmannschaften aufgestellt, welche Aufgaben und Pflichten hat der Bundestrainer, warum gibt es genug Geld, um zahlreiche Funktionärstreffen zu finanzieren, aber kein Geld für die Nationalmannschaft, um nur ein paar zu nennen. Diese Fragen stehen im Raum und werden in Foren und auf Schachseiten im Internet diskutiert, aber bislang hat sich der Deutsche Schachbund noch nicht an der Diskussion beteiligt. Ich fürchte, der DSB versucht, diese Fragen einfach zu ignorieren und das Problem auszusitzen. Aber ich finde, der Deutsche Schachbund sollte sich äußern.

Die Fragen stellte Johannes Fischer

Schachbund auf Abwegen

Derzeit wird hitzig über den Deutschen Schachbund und seine ehemalige Nationalmannschaft diskutiert. Forderten die Spieler zu viel oder bemüht sich der DSB nicht um seine Elite?

Zwischen 1990 und 2001 blieben die Honorare der deutschen Spitzenspieler bei Einsätzen auf Schacholympiaden unverändert, mit der Euroumstellung wurden sie kurzerhand um gut 2% reduziert. Anscheinend hat sich bis heute nichts zum Guten gewandelt, denn vor einiger Zeit setzte die Nationalmannschaft zur Meuterei an. Ein Vorstoß, den ich gut nachvollziehen kann. Wer will heute schon mit dem Einkommen von vor 20 Jahren leben? Verständlich also, dass es zu einem längst überfälligen, geschlossenen Aufbegehren der Mannschaft kam. Die Spieler forderten eine Aufbesserung, die den Gesamtetat in der Spitze mit bis zu 20.000 € belastet hätten, doch wäre man auch mit wesentlich weniger zufrieden gewesen.

Ich habe das Gefühl, dass letztendlich schon eine Summe in Höhe von gut 5.000 € ausgereicht hätte, um den endgültigen Bruch zu verhindern. Man wollte nur eine Bewegung, einen Kompromiss – ein Bekenntnis des Schachbundes zu seinen Spielern. Doch das blieb aus. Wie auch in meinen mehr als 15 Jahren Spitzenschach (1985-2002), wurde einfach nur auf leere Kassen verwiesen. Nun ist es nicht einfach, für Schach Geld zu generieren, doch seit jeher hege ich Zweifel daran, dass es ernsthaft versucht wird und es Marketing in unserer Sportart gibt.

Leere Kassen hin oder her, es wäre traurig gewesen, wenn der Schachbund nur auf das fehlende Geld verwiesen hätte. Den Spielern den schwarzen Peter zustecken, sie sogar aus dem Kader zu nehmen, geht jedoch klar zu weit.

Eine Erwartungshaltung, Spieler müssten jederzeit und zu den Bedingungen des Schachbundes bereit sein, Deutschland zu vertreten, ist doch etwas unrealistisch (die jährliche Förderung der A-Kadermitglieder beläuft sich anscheinend nur auf einen 50-70% Kostenzuschuss zur Europameisterschaft). Oder würden unsere Fußballspieler für lau antreten? Und gerade die könnten es sich leisten!

Die jetzt für die Schacholympiade im September in Sibirien gemeldete Mannschaft wirkt wie eine Kapitulation, die Kriterien der Aufstellung sind schwammig. Ich kann mich des Eindrucks nicht erwehren, dass die Nächsten genommen wurden, die die Bedingungen des Schachbundes ohne Widerspruch akzeptierten und es noch als Ehre ansehen, für das Vaterland zu kämpfen. Gerüchteweise wurden die Honorare nun halbiert statt angehoben...

Für die mitgliedermäßig drittstärkste Schachföderation und eines der wirtschaftlich stärksten Länder eine höchst unbefriedigende Situation. Möglicherweise ist es an der Zeit, für Verantwortliche Konsequenzen zu ziehen, doch vielleicht kann der Aufstand auch wieder einmal durch konsequentes Aussitzen gemeistert werden. In der neuen Ausgabe der „Zeitschrift Schach“ finden unsere ehemaligen Spitzenspieler nun anscheinend deutliche Worte. Leider liegt mir das Heft noch nicht vor.