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TURIN HAS THEM ALL

Turin is the capital of Piedmont, Italy. It is an industrial centre in the northwestern part of the country and has over one million of inhabitants. In 2006 Turin will see fulfilled some of its deeply rooted wishes. It will host the Olympic Winter Games, the Chess Olympiad, the Computer Olympiad, the World Computer-Chess Championship, and the Computers and Games 2006 Conference. This is a really great success for all the organizers involved.

In the past we saw the Olympic Games in Barcelona (1992) and the World Computer-Chess Championship in Madrid (1992), but we never saw them together in the same city. Of course, the Olympic Winter Games precede the other four events, since the ice floor is not so appropriate for chess players and other game players. Nevertheless, the Olympic Oval is the common meeting place for the sportsmen and the gamesmen. The scientists among the participants will find their meeting place at the University.

In some sense, two wishes are fulfilled. First, the Chess Olympiad and the Computer Olympiad have never been mentioned in one organizational schedule with the Olympic Games. A few years ago, chess was introduced at the Olympic Games as a potential newcomer. Two demonstration matches were played, but nothing has been heard of this initiative since then. So, chess has not become an official sport within the framework of the Olympic Games.

Second, although FIDE and ICGA have an agreement of mutual support, so far they never succeeded in organizing a common Olympiad or World Championship. In 2006, this is also not the case, but we are close now. Computer programmers and chess players will be in the same hall (the Oval) and will have the opportunity to enjoy each other's playing performances. It may evoke sympathy and respect from the two sides.

What do we expect from such an exchange of interest? The ICGA might have thought to aim at opening negotiations on participating in the Chess Olympiad with a computer team of four programs. This has been a wish from the ICGA (in fact the ICCA) since the 1980s. In the 1978 FIDE meeting Professor Euwe, then FIDE President, made a case for such participation. However, considering the current playing strength of the top computers (recall HYDRA defeating IGM Adams, and see the report of the 2nd Bilbao Man vs. Machine Team Championship, pp. 254-255 of this issue) we may come up with a more adequate proposal. But what?

Times have changed considerably. Nowadays computers have the upper hand when looking at chess playing strength. We may serve the Grand Masters with deep calculations, supply them with new ideas, and help them analyse a game for publication in a chess column or on the Internet. The websites are multifaceted, but the help of a strong playing machine can be fascinating.

A telling example of the use of a website is the use by Connect6, a new game developed by I-C. Wu, D-Y. Huang, and H-C. Chang (see pp. 235-243 of this issue). The authors report that their program is connected to the online game system supported by ThinkNewIdea Inc. Since the introduction of the game at the ACG11 conference in Taipei, Taiwan last year, the program has played tens of thousands of players. Of course, this game will participate at the Computer Olympiad in Turin, too.

Connect6 is not the only sign of change we are witnessing at this moment. The ICGA is slowly broadening its scope. Another remarkable newcomer is Pool. In Taipei, Taiwan there was a first competition in this domain and two contributions at the ACG 11 conference. In this issue we see a full article by Will Leckie and Michael Greenspan on Pool Physics Simulation. Moreover, the Pool players will also be present in Turin.

At the end of this Editorial, I would like to recognize the organizers of the recent past who made this development possible, those from Graz (2003), Ramat-Gan (2004), Reykjavik (2005), and Taipei (2005). Thank you.

Finally, I would like to set the spotlights on Paolo Ciancarini, the organizer of the ICGA activities in Turin. Owing to his efforts the ICGA is happy that they may announce the organization of

- the 14th World Computer-Chess Championship
- the 11th Computer Olympiad
- the Computer and Games Conference 2006 (CG2006).

I hope to see you all in Turin.

Jaap van den Herik

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