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EARLY RETIREMENT

Human geniuses are unpredictable. In the early 1960s Robert Fischer complained that Mikhail Botvinnik only played occasionally in tournaments, whereas a World Champion was supposed to show his supremacy as often as possible to the community. As soon as Fischer himself became World Champion he quit the scene, only to return some twenty years later to play the same opponent again. Maybe there was a good reason for Fischer to stop playing, maybe not. Many top sportsmen receive the proper advice of stopping with their activities as soon as they have reached their peak. A few do stop, but most of them continue nevertheless. They enjoy their sport, they feel at ease in the community, or they would like to raise their performances, showing that the last results were by no means their best.

Many fans believed that the ultimate IBM challenge was to achieve near perfection in chess, viz. playing a match against Kasparov for the title of World Champion. So far, only in the world of Checkers we have seen such a match: CHINOOK versus Tinsley. Indeed, that match had its own complications, and its success was tainted by Dr. Tinsley's forfeit.

The world of chess and computer chess have a common interest: both would like to see a third match between Kasparov and DEEP BLUE. However, IBM has decided otherwise: they followed the proper advice, and stopped. They have won a good reputation and can now sleep at ease. Although it is not our choice, we have to respect their decision and are still grateful for what they have offered to computer chess.

Meanwhile DEEP BLUE's victory over Kasparov has invoked many thoughts, opinions and proposals for future research. In three workshops (Princeton New Jersey, Providence Rhode Island, and Nagoya Japan) the question arose which game should take the prime research position over from chess? There were pros and cons for Go, Shogi and Chinese Chess. But still, Chess itself was also in the running. My opinion is that fundamental computer-chess research has not finished with the 1997 Kasparov-DEEP BLUE match. DEEP BLUE's early retirement makes

the point more acute: it will take three to four years before another program reaches DEEP BLUE's current level. Moreover, we still do not understand DEEP BLUE's strategies behind its moves. This holds true, even for perfect moves selected from databases. Hence, there remains much scope for chess-oriented research.

Yes, the results achieved so far have enormous impact. Researchers in other areas will investigate how to apply some of the techniques, how to explain them, how to use them, and how to elaborate on them. For instance, DEEP BLUE's match result brought computer chess back into the minds of philosophers: on October 8, 1997 Daniel C. Dennett will give a lecture entitled: *Can Machines Think? DEEP BLUE & Beyond*.

Of course, Kasparov grudgingly received the bad news of DEEP BLUE's early retirement. "It looks like a researcher who markets his finding, takes the profit, and then withdraws the product." Whatever the case, IBM has promised to have DEEP BLUE Jr around, playing a match now and then. Indeed a demonstration game has been scheduled for October 20, 1997 in Rotterdam at the beginning of the deciding match for the Dutch Championship Timman-Nikolić. Murray Campbell will act as operator.

Clearly, IBM is doing its utmost to preserve its reputation. In another reaction, to Kasparov's statement, C.J. Tan promised to publish the scientific results achieved by the DEEP BLUE team. Our readers will be glad to hear this, especially since the *ICCA Journal* welcomes any submission from their side. Whatever the future way brings us, your Editor believes that such early retirement should imply an intriguing return.

Jaap van den Herik

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