INTERNATIONAL COMPUTER CHESS ASSOCIATION
(I.C.C.A.)
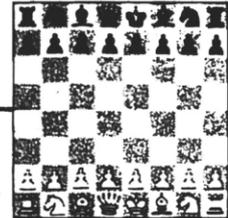
ICCA Newsletter

EDITORIAL

This month the North American Computer Chess Championship, sponsored by the Association for Computing Machinery, was held from October 24 to October 26 in Dallas, Texas. Results of that tournament will be published in the next (and final) issue of the Newsletter for 1982.* In this issue we report on several events which involved computers and human chess players: a demonstration in Paris, the Fredkin Incentive Match, the U. S. Open, and a demonstration in Montreal. These types of challenges are becoming more prevalent. In this issue I am also reprinting the "Rules for Play Involving Computers" which have been adopted for U. S. Chess Federation tournaments.

Other items in this Newsletter include an article by Dr. Laszlo Lindner on how the computer can help problem composers, a letter from Mr. Lee Roselle about the possible formation of a computer postal chess club, a poem by Anthony Pickert, and some ICCA items including our annual financial statement.

*See the surprising finish on page 14.

The major planning item for the coming year will be the Fourth World Computer Chess Championship which will be held in cooperation with the Association for Computing

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The final presentation was by David Slate who discussed a number of broad topics related to the general issue of future prospects in computer chess. The first question which David posed was why does brute force seem to work so well? After all, human players do not "grow" immense search trees! David's conclusion is that it is an "accident of chess" that winning of pieces is well correlated with winning the game. Thus, current versions of brute force programs (full-width, alpha-beta, depth first, fixed depth, iterative search, with static evaluation at the terminal nodes, plus positional factors thrown in and some continuations at the horizon) do manage to play moves which are tactically sound, hold all material for four or five moves, and have some vague positional value. But these factors do not correlate well enough!

A long discussion followed on whether there could be developed a general theory that if you can look deeper, you will play better. The general theory that perfect play always leads to victory was also explored. No earth-shaking revelations emerged, but the philosophical-issues elicited considerable discussion. Prof. Newborn had set up an interesting exhibition, a four-round Swiss-style tournament among three computers and three humans. The human players were Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2180), the 1981 Montreal Champion, Celine Roos (1987), Quebec's top woman player, and David Slate (2013), co-author of NUCHESS. The computers were BELLE (2168), Ostrich (1600), and Awit (1550). The moves were being made at a rate of 60 moves in 30 minutes.* The results of that exhibition follow this report.

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Machinery at their annual meeting in New York from October 22 to October 25, 1983. The ACM has pledged $20,000 to cover some of our expenses. We need to raise an additional $20,000 to help support the travel and living expenses for participants and special guests. Please let me hear from you on both suggestions for funding the Fourth World Championship and offers of help in organizing the Championship. More information about entry requirements and plans will be published in early 1983.

B. Mittman

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*In the opening round when Slate played BELLE, BELLE was incorrectly set to 62 moves in 13 minutes.