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Hosted by Mark Donlan



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Elo makes a revealing observation about Fischer’s 1975 match conditions.

Arpad Elo Letter

June 19, 1987

Larry Evans Reno, Nevada

Dear Larry:

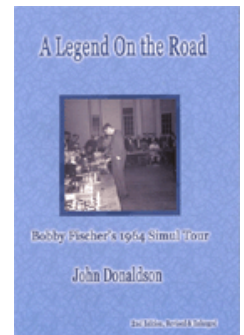
Thank you very much for your letter of May 29 and the inclosed literature on CHESSGATE. The latter is a sad commentary on the state of US chess and the USCF. I am very much afraid that the coming elections will not change the situation much. Most of the voting delegates are the clubhouse political types who will elect their own kind to the Policy Board. And those on the PB will be ever jealous of their small powers and suspicious of the masters. I hope I am wrong about the election, so let’s wait and see.

Re: the Kalme claims, I was not convinced by his arguments and I don’t think he convinced anybody. At that time (1975) I made an extensive probabilistic analysis of the situation which compared various likely events under the two systems of the match and without doubt the Fischer conditions favored the champion --- and in retrospect rightly so. This analysis runs to eight pages and if you are interested I could send you a copy. A shorter version appeared in the magazine CHESS but unfortunately I have no copy either of the article or of the magazine.

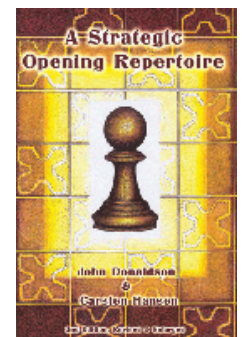
Further in retrospect/there is a simple argument in favor of the Fischer conditions without any elaborate probabilistic calculations. I owe credit to one of our local players (Al Losoff) for putting me on the train of thought which I regrettably missed twelve years ago. It goes as follows:

1. If the match at any time stands at 9:9 it indicates an equality between the contestants.
2. Thus the next decisive game could go either way since the contestants have equal probabilities of gaining the next decisive game.

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3. Thus a win by either player in the next decisive game shows no superiority any more than a single throw of a coin shows a superiority of heads or tails.

4. A 9:9 result then is properly declared a drawn match since the challenger has shown no clear superiority.

I find this intuitive approach more convincing than any fancy probabilistic calculation and I only wish I had had the insight to see it 12 years ago. Who knows, we might have seen a Fischer-Karpov match. Or would Bobby have found other excuses for not playing?

Cordially,

/s/ Arpad E. Elo

PS: Dr Euwe was Correct in his remark. AEE

This article first appeared at ChessCafe.com in June, 1998.

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