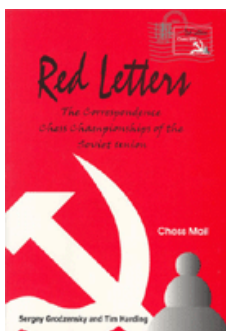




## COLUMNISTS

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## The Ratings Game: Meet Mr. Fifty Percent

I have recently been updating my correspondence game database, which is now available as *UltraCorr3a* at [www.chessmail.com](http://www.chessmail.com). In the process of collecting recent games, I made some curious discoveries. This article chiefly deals with an anomaly I found concerning some recent games involving one player.

During the search for unwanted duplicate games, one of the things I do is to check identical games where player names differ. The ones of more than trivial length are examined individually. One name figured prominently in this "clip database".

Let us call him Mr. Fifty Percent, because of the effect of his practices, which I shall shortly explain: they guarantee a fifty percent result in all games where he does this. Of course you cannot win tournaments by scoring fifty percent but you can increase your rating if the opponents are higher rated than you, and that seems to be the main point of the exercise.

I leave it to you to decide whether what he did is cheating. It is actually amusing in a way - though some of his opponents may well not agree.

I won't name the player here but I shall privately tell ICCF officials his name and it will be up to them to decide whether any action is appropriate. What this player has done is a matter of public record; the games are there for all to see on the ICCF webserver, but to spot the pattern and then work out exactly what happened has required considerable detective work.

It is unclear whether his stratagem is against the rules as presently framed. Rule 10a says that "any matter not covered in these rules shall be decided by the Tournament Director according to principle stated in ICCF Statutes and Rules, Code of Conduct Guidelines." I doubt if there is anything there that clearly covers this situation.

Mr. Fifty Percent's stratagem would have been impossible in the postal days when transmission times far exceeded the player's time allowance. Also, it would have cost money for postcards and stamps, and even with email correspondence chess it is fairly impracticable. The ICCF webserver makes it easy to make moves, and transmission of moves to the opponent is instant. So that is what has made this ploy possible, and explains why it was not done before.

### Here's how it's done

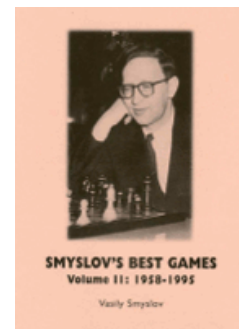
Say you are rated 2200 and in a tournament you have opponents A and B, rated 2340 and 2350. Against one you have white and the other black. You may be happy to score fifty percent against them. You could think that you might well do worse and fifty percent guarantees a rating improvement.

So when A opens 1 d4, say, you open with that move against B. You don't reply to A until you get B's move back. Say he replies 1...Nf6.

So you play 1...Nf6 against A and when he answers 2 c4 you play that against B and wait for his reply, and so on.

By proceeding in this way, you effectively do not have to pit your brains against either A or B. Instead, without knowing it, they play each other and you end up with either two draws or a win and a loss.

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Some readers may recollect the possibly apocryphal anecdote about two friends who played Alekhine simultaneously, one with white and one with black. In effect they made him play himself. Of course he noticed and so he "composed" a special position. Having created a suitably complicated position in which White had two options for a capture, he chose a move so outrageously bad that the opponent's friend ceased to copy and made the other capture. Now Alekhine had two lost positions but from now on he was playing the amateurs not himself, and so he duly won both games.

Mr. Fifty Percent's webserver stratagem is the exact mirror of this case. He is setting out to score fifty percent, so Alekhine's escape clause does not apply. So long as he correctly repeats the moves and does not exceed the time limit, he cannot fail to score fifty percent.

There is one risk. If B is a slow player, you could get into time trouble against A, or vice versa. If the time gets really tight, or an opponent takes leave at an inconvenient moment, you might have to take over the games yourself and end up losing them, but that is only a slight risk probably, given ICCF's generous time limits for server play. There is no way anybody except the tournament director can see games that are still in progress.

It is true that after the games are over, the moves become visible, but only somebody like me, who is collecting games and then searching for doubles, will spot curiosities like the following. It is not so unusual to play the same game with the same colour, especially in a sharp main line Sicilian, where there is much theory and many moves are forced, but to play the same game with both white and black suggests the "strategy" I have just outlined, especially if a player does it more than once.

Mr. Fifty Percent is currently rated 2276 by ICCF. He has already improved by his rating thanks to this system. If he is allowed to carry on doing it, and others copied him, it could compromise the ratings.

He appears to have started doing this move-copying in 2008 in a semifinal of the Correspondence World Championship. (That is not as grand as it sounds because there is a Candidates stage between semifinals and final, but these are still strong tournaments.)

In this tournament, he had six games with white and six with black. All the games started in pairs; i.e., there was a white game and black game with the same ECO code. That in itself was a little unusual but many players have openings they play with both colours.

In half the games, play diverged in the late opening or early middlegame. In the other half, they did not. Now for some examples.

### **Examples of the Fifty Percent Strategy**

In the following game, Mr. Fifty Percent was white against a former ICCF President, who outranked him by more than 200 rating points. He played the same game with black against a former World CC Championship finalist, who also outranked him by 200+ points. This was an ingenious and almost effortless way to make a substantial rating gain - and to damage the opponents' chances of qualifying for the next stage.

#### **Mr. Fifty Percent (2272) – Former President (2484)**

World Ch semifinal, ICCF server, 2008

Ruy Lopez [C88]

#### **1 e4 e5**

In the same tournament, the Former President was also black against the Former Finalist. Perhaps because he knew his opponent's repertoire, he chose to answer 1 e4 by the Caro-Kann Defence, 1...c6, otherwise they might have started to wonder why they had two similar games in the same tournament. When that starts to happen in correspondence tournaments, players usually decide to diverge to avoid "putting too many eggs in the same basket".

2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 a4 b4 9 d3  
d6 10 a5 Be6 11 Nbd2 Qc8 12 Nc4 Rb8 13 h3 h6 14 Be3 Rd8 15 Ba4 Qb7  
16 Nfd2 Nd7 17 c3 Bf6 18 Qf3



[FEN "1r1r2k1/1qpn1pp1/p1npbb1p/P3p3/  
BpN1P3/2PPBQ1P/1P1N1PP1/R3R1K1 b - - 0 18"]

**18...Ne7!?**

This is, I think, a deliberate pawn sacrifice, not a blunder. Anyway in the game where he had black, Mr. Fifty Percent made the same choice.

19 Bxd7 Rxd7 20 Bxh6 Rdd8 21 Ne3 Ng6 22 Nd5 Bxd5 23 exd5 bxc3 24  
bxc3 Nh4 25 Qg4 Ng6 26 Ne4 Be7 27 Bg5 Bxg5 28 Nxg5 Qxd5 29 Re4 Nf8  
30 d4 f6 31 Nf3 Qe6 32 Qg3 Qd7 33 Nh4 Rb5 34 c4 Rb2 35 Rg4 Ne6 36  
Nf5 g5 37 d5 Ng7 38 Nxg7 Qxg7 39 Rc1 Rdb8 40 c5 R2b3 41 Rc3 Rxc3 42  
Qxc3 f5 43 Rc4 Rb1+ 44 Kh2 e4 45 Qg3 Qe5 46 Qxe5 dxe5



[FEN "6k1/2p5/p7/P1PPppp1/  
2R1p3/7P/5PPK/1r6 w - - 0 47"]

47 g4 fxg4 48 Rxe4 gxh3 49 Rxe5 g4 50 Rg5+ Kf7 51 Rxg4 Rc1 52 d6  
Rxc5 53 dxc7 Rxc7 54 Kxh3 Rc3+ 55 Rg3 Rc5 56 Ra3 Kf6 ½-½

There was a second pair of identical drawn games in the same section. Here, too, both the opponents were rated substantially higher than Mr. Fifty Percent although not quite to the same degree as in the first pair. Still, in this way, he guaranteed himself 2/4, whereas otherwise he might well have scored zero. Of course he was never going to qualify for the Candidates this way, but his rating did improve.

**Player A (2429) – Mr. Fifty Percent (2272)**

World Ch semifinal, ICCF server, 2008

Sicilian Defence [B50]

**1 e4**

Here, too, there was, as it turned out, no danger of a duplicate as in the "real" game between Player A and Player B, although the colours were the same, the opening move was 1 b4. Of course there was no way Mr. Fifty Percent could know that.

**1...c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 c3 Nf6 4 h3**

Mr. Fifty Percent duly copied this unusual line as white in the paired game.

**4...Nc6 5 Bd3 e5 6 0-0 Be7 7 Re1 Be6 8 Bc2 Rc8 9 a4 0-0 10 d3 h6 11 Nbd2 Qc7 12 Bb3 d5 13 exd5 Nxd5 14 Nc4 Bd6 15 Ne3 Nxe3 16 Bxe3 Rfe8 17 Bxe6 Rxe6 18 Nh4 Ne7 19 Qg4 Qc6 20 Qe4 Rd8 21 Qxc6 Nxc6 22 Nf5 Bf8 23 Red1 Kh7 24 g4 g6 25 Ng3 Na5**



[FEN "3r1b2/pp3p1k/4r1pp/n1p1p3/P5P1/2PPB1NP/1P3P2/R2R2K1 w - - 0 26"]

Now White sacrifices a pawn to make something happen but in the end a drawish endgame is reached.

**26 b4 cxb4 27 cxb4 Bxb4 28 Rab1 Nc6 29 Bxa7 Ra8 30 Bb6 Rxa4 31 Ne4 Ra2 32 Bc5 Bxc5 33 Nxc5 Re7 34 Rxb7 Rxb7 35 Nxb7 Kg7 36 Kg2 Ra7 37 Nc5 Ra5 38 Rc1 Nd4 39 Rc4 f5 40 gxf5 gxf5**



[FEN "8/6k1/7p/r1N1pp2/2Rn4/3P3P/5PK1/8 w - - 0 41"]

**41 h4 Kf6 42 f4 Ra2+ 43 Kh3 Ne2 44 Nd7+ Ke6 45 Nxe5 Nxf4+ 46 Rxf4 Kxe5 47 Rf1 Rd2 48 Re1+ Kf6 49 Re3 Rd1 1/2-1/2**

A little care is needed at the end of a game if you employ this morally dubious stratagem. If you accept a draw offer too hastily, you could lose the corresponding game if the opponent is not agreeable. Most of the doubles I have identified have been draws. This is probably because when A offers you a draw, you offer it to B first, and if he accepts, then you accept against A, otherwise you play on. So the moves will usually be exactly the same and [ChessBase](#) can find the double. (I did find one "double" by Mr. Fifty Percent in a later event where one game ended after forty-two moves and the pair went to move other forty-three. Perhaps he forgot to offer the draw on the server software and had to make an additional move.)

I wondered at first why the ChessBase double kill function had not found pairs of wins and losses. Then I realized that few decisive correspondence games actually end in checkmate. If your opponent resigns, you do not necessarily do the same in the other game. You might prefer to play on a bit in the hope of a swindle. Then the final moves are not quite the same and maybe ChessBase does not spot the double so easily. Or, in the case of games you are certain of winning, you may diverge in the counterpart if you think you have found a better defence. I had to hunt for such cases by looking for Mr. Fifty Percent's losses and seeing if I could match wins to them.

There was one such case in the world championship semifinal, which was

identical until White's forty-ninth move.

**Player Y (2543) – Mr. Fifty Percent (2272)**

WCCC32SF02 ICCF server, 20.04.2008

Grünfeld Defence [D85]

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5**

In the "real" game between Player Y and Player Z, Black chose the King's Indian.

**4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0–0 9 Be2 Nd7 10 0–0 Nf6 11 Bd3 b6 12 Re1 Qc7 13 e5**

Black is already in trouble but bad moves must be copied as well as good ones if the plan is to work.

**13...Nd5 14 Qb3 e6 15 c4 Nb4 16 Be4 Bb7 17 Bxb7 Qxb7 18 dxc5 Na6 19 cxb6 Nc5 20 Qe3 Rfc8 21 Ba3 Bf8 22 Bb4 axb6 23 a3 Rd8 24 Red1 Rd7 25 Rd4 Rxd4 26 Qxd4 Qa6 27 h3 Ra7 28 Qd8 Ra8 29 Qh4 Qa4 30 Bxc5 Bxc5 31 Ng5 h5 32 Qf4 Qd7 33 Rb2 f5 34 Rd2 Qe7 35 h4 Rxa3**



[FEN "6k1/4q3/1p2p1p1/2b1PpNp/2P2Q1P/r7/3R1PP1/6K1 w - - 0 36"]

**36 Rd6!?**

White's advantage seemed to have been reduced but this is a clever way to keep fighting for a win.

**36...Bxd6 37 exd6 Qg7 38 c5 Qd7 39 Qb4 Ra5 40 cxb6 Rb5 41 Qd4 Rd5 42 Qf6 Rxd6 43 Qxg6+ Qg7 44 Qe8+ Qf8 45 Qxh5 Qg7 46 Qe8+ Qf8 47 Qg6+ Qg7 48 Qxg7+ Kxg7 49 b7**



[FEN "8/1P4k1/3rp3/5pN1/7P/8/5PP1/6K1 b - - 0 49"]

At this point, the two games diverged. Maybe Mr. Fifty Percent saw a better chance to fight for a draw. Or perhaps the opponent in one game had taken a month's leave and with his "clock ticking" he had to make a move. Time pressure and asynchronous vacations are the only way the scheme can come unstuck. Anyway, it did not matter as he scored a win and a loss.

**49...Rd1+**

The game Mr. Fifty Percent "won" ended 49...Rb6 50 Nxe6+ Kg6 51 Nc5 Rb2 52 g3 Rb4 53 Kg2 Kf7 54 f3 Rb2+ 55 Kg1 Kg6 56 g4 f4 57 Kf1 Kf7 58 h5 Ke7 59 g5 Kf7 60 Ke1 1–0. As the loser was rated 2500 and the player he lost to was even higher, this pair represented a useful rating gain.

**50 Kh2 Rb1 51 Nxe6+ Kg6 52 Nc5 Kh5 53 Kh3 Rb4 54 g3 Kg6 55 f4 Kh5 56 Kg2 Kg6 57 Kf3 Kh5 58 Ke3 Kg6 59 Kd3 Kh5 60 Kc3 Rb5 61 Kc4 Rb6 62 Kd5 Kh6 63 Ke5 Kg6 64 h5+ Kxh5 65 Kxf5 Kh6 66 g4 Kh7 67 Ke5 Kg6 68 f5+ Kg7 69 f6+ Kf7 70 g5 Kg6 71 Kd5 Kf7 72 Nd7 1–0** At last he resigned.

This event was a learning experience for Mr. Fifty Percent. In one pair where he chose to diverge he actually scored 1½/2, but in another case he went his own way at move eight, and only scored half a point. So overall he still scored fifty percent. One third of his games were *not* played by him at all, and if you include the decisive "games" that only diverged when they were effectively over, he actually played only a half. I shall be asking the ICCF Ratings Commissioner to calculate how many points he gained in this way.

And how many rating points did he gain by this fifty percent result?

Also in 2008, the same player entered the Third ICCF Webchess Open and played four preliminary groups. He played a total of twenty-four games and won one group. He did not employ this stratagem. As most of his opponents were lower rated, there would have been little point in doing so.

### **And then he does it again – in spades!**

Had the story ended there, one could say maybe he just saw it all as a joke, but no. In 2009 he repeated the whole ploy, much more systematically. Mr. Fifty Percent entered four sections of the Second ICCF Veterans World Cup, which is restricted to players of sixty years of age or older. The tournament began last September on the ICCF webserver.

The opposition was very mixed but balanced so that each section had roughly the same rating average. At that time his rating was 2245 so he was stronger than most of the opponents but in each group there were a few higher rated than him.

Playing four groups meant he had forty-eight games but he was able to reduce his workload somewhat in this way, and improve his rating at the same time. The fact that he had four groups meant that he could "improve" on the way he had handled the semi-final. He could pair an opponent from one section with an opponent from a different one. Then he could see how things were going and start to concentrate his attention on a section or two where he was scoring wins.

The first three players (at least) in each section will qualify, so a few draws against higher-rated opponents are not damaging; indeed they make sense. You are allowed to qualify for the semi-final round twice, so his aim would be to get into the top three of two groups and if he slipped down the table a bit in a couple of the others, it would not matter. He might even "waste" a qualification.

At the end of January this year, our "friend" started player in a similar event: competing in four of the fifty-two seven-player sections. However, no games can be seen online until at least ten in a section have finished, so it will be a while before we can be certain that he is playing the same "game" again. My hypothesis, however, is that his policy is now even dictating the type of event he chooses to enter: multiple group events with a wide range of opponent strengths.

Here is one example.

**Mr. H (2408) – Mr. Fifty Percent**  
ICCF Veterans World Cup-2 prelims, 2009  
Najdorf Sicilian [B92]



1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 a6 6 Be2 e5 7 Nb3 Be7 8 0-0  
 0-0 9 Qd3 Be6 10 Bd2 Nc6 11 Nd5 a5 12 a4 Bxd5 13 exd5 e4 14 Qb5 Nb4  
 15 Bxb4 axb4 16 Qxb4 Qc7 17 Nd2 e3 18 fxe3 Nxd5 19 Qc4 Qc6 20 Rf3  
 Bd8 21 c3 Re8 22 Qxc6 bxc6 23 Nc4



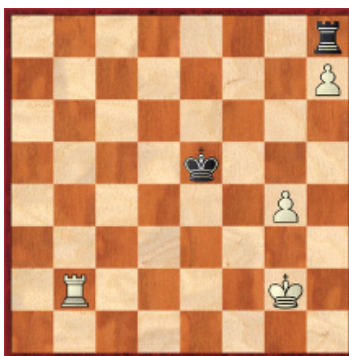
[FEN "r2br1k1/5ppp/2pp4/3n4/P1N5/  
 2P1PR2/1P2B1PP/R5K1 b - - 0 23"]

23...Nxe3 24 Rxe3 Rxe3 25 Nxe3 Bb6 26 Kf2 Re8 27 Bf3 Rxe3 28 a5 Ba7  
 29 Re1 Re6+ 30 Kf1 d5 31 Rc1 g5 32 b4 Rf6 33 h3 Rf4 34 Ke2 Kf8 35 g3  
 Rf6 36 c4 Re6+ 37 Kf1 Re3 38 Kg2 Rb3



[FEN "5k2/b4p1p/2p5/P2p2p1/  
 1PP5/1r3BPP/6K1/2R5 w - - 0 39"]

39 b5 cxb5 40 c5 Bb8 41 c6 Bc7 42 Ra1 Re3 43 a6 Re8 44 Bxd5 Ra8 45  
 Rf1 Ke7 46 Rxf7+ Kd6 47 Bf3 Ra7 48 Rxh7 b4 49 Rd7+ Kc5 50 Rd5+  
 Kb6 51 Be2 Kxc6 52 Rxg5 b3 53 Bb5+ Kd6 54 Bd3 b2 55 h4 Bd8 56 Rg6+  
 Ke5 57 h5 Bf6 58 h6 Rxa6 59 h7 Ra8 60 g4 Kd4 61 Rxf6 Kxd3 62 Rb6  
 Ke4 63 Rb4+ Ke5 64 Rxb2 Rh8 1/2-1/2



[FEN "7r/7P/8/4k3/6P1/8/1R4K1/8 w - - 0 65"]

An exciting game - but Mr. Fifty Percent was not responsible for any of these moves. The final position is a book draw, as analysed by Keres long ago.

The ICCF server shows that Mr. Fifty Percent played the identical sixty-four move game with white versus the highest rated player (2390) in another section. How likely is this to have occurred if it was not deliberate policy by the player concerned from the start?

Here is another example from the Veterans World Cup.

In one Section, he has 8/11 with one game in progress. If he does not lose it, he will win the group. He has certainly qualified anyway. The following is one of "his" games from that section against the player who has already won the group.

**Mr. Fifty Percent – Player C (2252)**

ICCF Veterans World Cup-2 prelims, 2009

Queen's Indian Defence [E12]

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 a3 Bb7 5 Nc3 d5 6 cxd5 Nxd5 7 e4 Nxc3 8 bxc3 Bxe4 9 Ne5 a6 10 Qg4 Bf5 11 Qg3 f6 12 Nc4 b5 13 Ne3 Bg6 14 a4 b4 15 Bc4 Nc6 16 Bxe6 Qd6 17 Bd5 Rd8 18 0-0 Ne7**



[FEN "3rkb1r/2p1n1pp/p2q1pb1/3B4/Pp1P4/2P1N1Q1/5PPP/R1B2RK1 w k - 0 19"]

**19 Qxd6 Rxd6 20 Bf3 bxc3 21 Ra3 c2 22 Rc3 c6 23 Nxc2 Nd5 24 Rc4 Bd3 25 Re1+ Kd7 26 Rc5 Re6 27 Bxd5 cxd5 28 Rxd5+ Rd6 29 Ne3 Be4 30 Rxd6+ Bxd6 31 Nc4 Re8 32 Nxd6 Kxd6 33 Ba3+ Kd5 34 f3 Bg6 35 Rxe8 1/2-1/2**

This was identical with reversed colours to a game against a strong American player in another section.

In that Section, three players had a higher rating than Mr. Fifty Percent and he did this with all them. In one group he does not seem to have done it with a high-rated opponent; maybe that man was on leave at the start of the event, so escaped. However, there is also at least one still unfinished game with a high-rated opponent.

**Player A (2416) – Mr. Fifty Percent**

ICCF Veterans World Cup-2 prelims, 2009

Two Knights Game [C59]

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 d5 5 exd5 Na5 6 Bb5+ c6 7 dxc6 bxc6 8 Be2 h6 9 Nh3 Bd6 10 d3 0-0 11 Nc3 Rb8 12 0-0 Be6 13 b3 c5 14 Bf3 Qd7 15 Qe2 Rb6 16 Kh1 Nc6 17 Bxc6 Rxc6 18 Ng1 Re8 19 f3 Nh5 20 Qf2 f5 21 Nge2 Rc7 22 Bb2 Qc6 23 Rae1 Rf7 24 Qh4 Nf6 25 Nd1 Nd5 26 Nec3 Nf4 27 Ne3 Bc7 28 Qf2 Rfe7 29 Na4 a6 30 Ba3 Bd6 31 Rd1 a5 32 Rfe1 Rd7 33 Nc4 Bxc4 34 dxc4 Ne6 35 Nc3 Nd4 36 Nd5 Qa6 37 f4 e4 38 Bb2 Qa7 39 Bxd4 cxd4 40 Qxd4 Qxd4 41 Rxd4 Bb4 42 Re2 Kf7 43 Rd1 Bc5 44 g3 Rb8 45 Kg2 h5 46 c3 Rdd8 47 h3 g6 48 g4 Rd7 49 Rdd2 Rdd8 50 gxh5 gxh5 51 Kf1 h4 52 Rg2 Rg8 53 Rxg8 Rxg8 54 b4 Rg1+ 55 Ke2 axb4 56 cxb4 Bf8 57 c5 Rh1 58 c6 Bd6 59 b5 Rxh3 60 b6**





[FEN "8/5k2/1PPb4/3N1p2/  
4pP1p/7r/P2RK3/8 b - - 0 60"]

At this point, the opponent with black resigned against Mr. Fifty Percent.

**60...Rh2+ 61 Kd1 Rxd2+ 62 Kxd2 Ke8 63 Ke1 h3 64 Kf2 Kd8 65 Kg3 Kc8  
66 Kxh3 1-0**

In another game he seems to have decided that he had found a better attacking move than was played against him, but still ended up with fifty percent.

#### **Mr. L (2285) – Mr. Fifty Percent**

ICCF Veterans World Cup-2 prelims, 2009  
Sveshnikov Sicilian [B33]

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8  
Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c4 b4 12 Nc2 a5 13 Qf3 Be6 14 Rd1  
Bxd5 15 cxd5 Na7 16 Ne3 0-0 17 Bd3 Bg5 18 Nf5 Rc8 19 h4 Bc1 20 Qe2  
g6 21 Ne3 Rc5 22 Nc4 Bh6 23 h5 Bg5 24 Nd2 Qb6 25 g3 Nb5 26 Nb3 Nd4  
27 Nxd4 exd4 28 Kf1 b3 29 Qg4 Bf6 30 hxg6 hxg6**



[FEN "5rk1/5p2/1q1p1bp1/p1rP4/3pP1Q1/  
1p1B2P1/PP3P2/3R1K1R w - - 0 31"]

**31 e5!?! Bg7**

Here 31...Bxe5 32 Qh4 Re8 (or Rfc8) 33 Qh7+ is not clear. The main point no doubt was to activate the bishop on d3: 31...dxe5 is clearly bad because of 32 Bxg6.

**32 e6 Qb7 33 Qh4 Re8 34 Qh7+ Kf8 35 exf7 Qxf7 36 Bxg6 Qf3 37 Rh4  
Qxd1+ 38 Kg2 Qc1 39 Bxe8 bxa2**



[FEN "4Bk2/6bQ/3p4/p1rP4/3p3R/6P1/pP3PK1/2q5 w - - 0 40"]

#### 40 Bd7

At this point, Mr. Fifty Percent apparently decided he could win the game himself and varied with 40 Qf5+ Kxe8 41 Qg6+ Kf8 42 Qxd6+ Kf7 43 Qe6+ Kf8 44 Re4 Rc8 45 Rf4+ Qxf4 46 Qxc8+ Ke7 47 gxf4 a1Q 48 Qe6+ Kd8 49 d6 1–0. That game finished some weeks earlier than the parallel game that he eventually lost. Strangely, this was a rare case where one of the players concerned had a slightly lower rating (but did have a title).

**40...a1Q 41 Rf4+ Qxf4 42 gxf4 Rxd5 43 Qe4 Bh8 44 Qe8+ Kg7 45 Be6 Qb1 46 Qg8+ Kh6 47 Qxh8+ 1–0**

I found other examples. One of his losses was identical to the point where his parallel opponent resigned. Another win/loss pair was similarly identical bar the last couple of moves. I also found another pair of draws.

In all, I found nine pairs (eighteen games) that were in all essential aspects identical; i.e., at least a third of his games were not played by him. A few more pairs may be revealed when all his games are finished.

With lower-rated opponents, he also sometimes starts the games in pairs but diverges when he sees a clear opportunity to play better. Thus, in one pair of games with opponents rated around 2050, the games only diverged after twenty-five moves. He then drew one and won the other.

In another case, he drew with black after twenty-five moves, but evidently he either did not offer a draw with white in the corresponding game, or else Black refused it. He played on and won in fifty-three moves.

#### Mr. Fifty Percent – Mr. K (2109)

Veterans World Cup-2 prel-21 ICCF server, 01.09.2009  
Dragon Sicilian [B76]

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0–0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0–0–0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Bd4 e5 13 Bc5 Re8 14 Ne4 Be6 15 h4 Nf4 16 Qe1 Bd5 17 c4 Qc7 18 Bd6 Qb6 19 cxd5 cxd5 20 g3 dxe4 21 gxf4 exf4 22 Qb4 Red8 23 Qxb6 axb6 24 Rh2 Rxa2 25 Kb1**



[FEN "3r2k1/5pbp/1p1B2p1/8/4pp1P/5P2/rP5R/1K1R1B2 b - - 0 25"]

Mr. Fifty Percent accepted a draw as black here. Evidently he either did not

offer a draw with white in this corresponding game, or else Black refused it. He played on and won in fifty-three moves.

**25...Rda8 26 Rhd2 Ra1+ 27 Kc2 Rxd1 28 Rxd1 exf3 29 Bxf4 Bf6 30 Rd3 f2 31 h5 Ra4 32 Rf3 Ra2 33 Bc1 Bd4 34 Rf4 Bc5 35 Bd2 Ra7 36 h6 b5 37 Bxb5 f5 38 Bd3 Rd7 39 Bf1 Kf7 40 Rc4 Bd6 41 Be3 Bg3 42 b4 Re7 43 Bf4 Bxf4 44 Rxf4 Kf6 45 Rxf2 Rb7 46 Kc3 Kg5 47 b5 Kxh6 48 Kc4 Kg5 49 Bg2 Rb8 50 Ra2 Kf6 51 Ra8 Rxa8 52 Bxa8 Ke6 53 Kc5 1-0**

#### **Another strange case**

There is also another ICCF player with a rather strange rating history. The last report of the ICCF Ratings Commissioner, without naming the player, states that a rule change will be likely at the next Congress to stop some clever mathematical manipulation of the rating rules. How exactly it is being done and what loophole is being exploited, I am unsure.

For several years that player had a fairly normal fluctuation of rating around the 2340 mark, but 2005-6 it soared and he peaked at 2566 in the second list for 2006. In the first rating list of 2007 he was down slightly to 2499, and it seems he withdrew from several tournaments. The consequent multiple losses plunged him to 1916 and even as low as 1896 in 2008. He then started to take on a large number of games and, his rating climbed to 2621 on the first of this year's lists.

Seeing that it was about to go higher still on the second list, the Commissioner decided to freeze the player's rating at this figure until the ICCF Congress can discuss the matter in September.

It is also noteworthy that a few players now appear as "Anonymous" in the ICCF rating list and database. Apparently they insisted on their names being deleted and they threatened legal action. To maintain consistent data, they could not be deleted and so they have been marked as anonymous. (Has anybody tried this with FIDE yet?) Of course it is still possible to find out who they really are by examining the published tournament records of their opponents, but only if you have the necessary source data.

Some people certainly have strange ways!

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#### **Postscript One: Campomanes dies**

Former FIDE President Florencio Campomanes died on 3 May, aged eighty-three. To his credit, he attracted many more countries into FIDE than had hitherto belonged so that it was no longer an American-European club. Less creditable was his motive for doing so - to obtain and hold power - and the effect of this change in FIDE politics. Because of the one nation, one vote system, small states with relatively few players, little chess tradition and few strong players could outvote the countries where the majority of serious players live. It might be democratic but it is arguable whether this was good for chess.

He was also controversial because of his association with the notorious Filipino president Marcos, and because of his decision to stop the first Karpov-Kasparov title match after forty-eight games. Chess historians will probably still argue about "Campo" for years to come.

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#### **Postscript Two: Title match**

The World Championship match between Anand and Topalov was still in progress at the deadline for this column, so I shall write about it next month.

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