

THE IRISH CHESS UNION

Cumann Fichille na hÉireann



PATRON: Michael D. Higgins, PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

30th August 2015

Mr Alan Salsac
Chairperson
Munster Chess Union

Re: Position of Mr Gerry Graham as Munster Delegate on the Irish Chess Union (ICU) Executive Committee.

Dear Alan

I am writing to you concerning your nominee as Munster Delegate to the ICU.

At an Executive Committee meeting held on Thursday 27th August, 2015 a vote of no confidence in Mr Gerry Graham was put to the meeting and passed. I then asked him to leave the meeting.

The basis for the vote was the behaviour of Mr Graham in relation to certain matters being addressed by the Committee. Before the vote was taken I put two of these matters to Mr Graham as I considered them to be the most serious as follows:

Ennis Chess Congress

An individual ICU member, Mr Gabriel Mirza was refused entry to the 2015 Congress and appealed to the ICU for assistance. He had an arrangement with the organisers whereby he would get free entry if he organised a GM to play in the event. Accordingly, he stuck to this agreement and sourced a GM for the tournament, but was then told that he could not play in the event. I had two very lengthy conversations with John Cassidy of the Ennis Chess Club about this matter. In both conversations he indicated to me that the dilemma that he faced was that if he allowed Mr Mirza to enter the event, he would have no arbiter or equipment to run it because Mr Graham had told him he would not act as arbiter if Gabriel was allowed to enter. John repeated the same concern to another member of the ICU Executive, Mr Colm Daly.

Gabriel Mirza was subsequently allowed play in the event following a discussion amongst John's organising committee. This decision was on foot of representations I had made on behalf of the ICU Executive to the organisers of the event. The decision to allow Gabriel Mirza to play was contingent on him signing an undertaking about his conduct if allowed to play which I had drafted.

On 10th May 2015 Mr Graham emailed the Executive Committee of the ICU as follows:

"John Cassidy told me when he asked me to be arbiter that they were not going to allow G.Mirza to play.

As the official arbiter for the event, I take no stand. One of the first duties of an arbiter is to be objective and as I have already told John, once I have undertaken to be the arbiter, I will fulfil that role no matter who is playing."

This flatly contradicted what John Cassidy said to two other members of the Executive. The matter was to be discussed further at the executive's meeting scheduled for 21st May, on the Thursday after the Ennis Congress had been held. In the event, Mr Graham did not attend that meeting and was on holidays when the Executive's next meeting took place on 2nd July 2015, so the first opportunity to raise this issue "face to face" was at the meeting on 27th August 2015.

It is also important to note that the position of the executive on members being refused entry to events without being given specific reasons for such a decision by tournament organisers was a matter of general principle rather than being about individual members. The ICU has had considerable engagement with a number of tournament organisers about this matter and has put forward constructive proposals to address any similar cases in the future.

Arbiter Registration Payment for Gabriel Mirza.

A request was received from Gabriel Mirza during the first week of August 2015 by the then ICU Secretary, Bryan Tobin, to register him as an Arbiter with FIDE. It involved a 20 euro fee. As he was acting as an Assistant Arbiter in a tournament in Romania, Gabriel Mirza needed to be registered with FIDE to avoid potential difficulties for the Romanian tournament organisers. Mr Ted Jennings and Mr Graham were copied on the request and Mr Jennings advised the committee that Gabriel Mirza would first of all have to be signed off by the Irish Chess Arbiters Association (ICAA) as a National Arbiter (NA) before he could be registered with FIDE. Mr Graham also advised the Executive that he saw little point in adding Mr Mirza to the list of licensed arbiters until he fulfils "the listed requirements, as others have done before him".

Mr Graham is the Chairperson of the Irish Chess Arbiter's Association and misled the committee about the true position concerning the registration of Gabriel Mirza. There is no requirement to have somebody who has successfully completed the required FIDE courses to be licensed by the ICAA as a National Arbiter. Once a person has successfully met FIDE requirements, their registration with FIDE is done directly by the national federation, in this case via our Rating Officer, Andrew Kildea.

Mr Graham advised Andrew that the ICAA was empowered to license National Arbiters on behalf of the ICU by a decision of the previous executive taken sometime in early 2014. The rules for this licensing function cannot be found on the ICU website, but are on the ICAA site. When this was put to Mr Graham, at the executive meeting on Thursday, he indicated that updating the ICAA website was not his responsibility, but that the rules were on the site for a considerable period. In fact the rules are a relatively recent addition to the site. Looking back on the site's history, through Google cache, demonstrates that the rules were not visible on the site until after Gabriel Mirza raised this issue. It appears that the rules mentioned by Mr

Graham were only published on the website after the issue with Gabriel Mirza arose, in order to justify Mr Graham's assertions. Furthermore, once a person is licensed as an Arbiter by FIDE, the person is automatically registered as an Irish National Arbiter with no input required from the ICAA. Therefore these "rules" are invalid as they do not accurately reflect FIDE requirements.

The above two examples were considered sufficiently serious to indicate a pattern of unacceptable behaviour on the part of Mr Graham in his role on the ICU Executive to justify the action taken at the ICU Executive meeting held on 27th August 2015. I think it is also important to distinguish between the general issue of Mr Graham's behaviour and the fact that the two incidents referred to above happen to involve a particular ICU member about whom issues have arisen in the past. The issue is one of trust and I do not believe that Mr Graham can be trusted to fulfil the requirements of serving in any capacity on the executive given his behaviour as outlined above.

I might also add that the Executive has had issues concerning a FIDE Arbiter Norm application submitted by Mr Ted Jennings on behalf of Mr Pete Morriss in furtherance of Mr Morriss's application for the FIDE Arbiter Title. The issue for the Executive in this case was that a number of players at the 2014 Irish Senior Championship, where Pete Morriss claimed to be an Assistant Arbiter, had no recollection of Mr Morriss's presence for the full 9 days of the event or that he had actually carried out any of the duties of Arbiter. Mr Jennings was the main arbiter for the event and insofar as anybody could recall it was Mr Jennings, and not Mr Morriss who fulfilled the arbiter role. The reason that this matter came to the attention of the executive in the first instance was that Mr Graham had forwarded on the application to Andrew Kildea, the Rating Officer for processing and had already copied Andrew's signature onto the application forms without his permission. On inspection of the documents submitted, Andrew noticed that his signature was already on three official documents which was considered totally inappropriate. Following an investigation of the circumstances of this case, the FIDE Arbiter's Commission have rejected the application.

In all of the circumstances, I am strongly of the view that the decision to put a vote of no confidence in Mr Graham before the Executive at last Thursday's meeting was fully justified.

In relation to your point about Munster being unrepresented for most of the meeting, I enclose as requested the agenda for it. You will note that the main items were to discuss nominations and motions for the forthcoming AGM and these documents are also enclosed for your information. The decisions taken at the meeting were to publish the nominations on or before the 31st August 2015 and to publish the motions to be put forward to the AGM. Of the proposals submitted, there was only one, in the opinion of the executive, which represented a valid motion that could be put forward for decision at the AGM. The other decision taken was to award the holding of the 2016 Irish Junior Championships to some members of the St Benildus Chess Club who had put in a proposal to run the event. This proposal had been widely discussed within the executive in recent months and there were no objections from any members of the executive to it prior to the meeting when it was signed-off. The absence of a Munster delegate would not, in my view, have disadvantaged your union in any way.

I am writing this letter to you to clarify what occurred and to explain the rational for the decision taken and the approach adopted. I would also ask that you consider nominating another person to act as your delegate on the ICU executive.

In addition, I would welcome clarification of your understanding of the following issues:

- The ICU's current position concerning Gabriel Mirza;
- The current position in relation to ICU engagement with Tournament organisers;
- Who had control of the ICU website assets up to March 2015;
- How two teams were entered into the European Club Cup; and
- Why the INCC for 2015 was not rated.

If you require any further information, please contact me at your convenience.

Yours sincerely

Pat Fitzsimons
Chairperson
Irish Chess Union.