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# Chess

### AFTER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, WHAT NOW?

By GUTHRIE McCLAIN

Under the aegis of Guthrie McClain for the past 25 years, the "California Chess Reporter" has ceased publication due to the enforced demise of its parent organization, the California State Chess Federation. The circumstances leading to the breakup of the state federation and its magazine are described from McClain's point of view in an article that should interest California chess players. His comments have been edited here to conform to space requirements.

Our subscribers will naturally want to know what has happened to the California State Chess Federation and to the "California Chess Reporter." I assure the reader that the events which forced closing down The Reporter were very welcome. I was ready to quit; after 25 years the work was becoming a burden. I was not even close to finding someone to take over, and fund raising was becoming difficult because the CSCF was not holding the customary tournaments and other activities which brought in members.

The "undoing" of the CSCF was made possible at the annual meeting of the USCF at Fairfax, Va., in August 1976. Hans Pschmann of Fremont, an official of the Central California Chess Association, was inspired by John Barnard, president of the Southern California Chess League, to introduce a motion authorizing multiple state chapters. It was decided to permit states with more than 5,000 members to have two official state chapters.

With the authority to set up two USCF affiliates in California, the new powers-to-be lost no time in deposing those previously in charge. The first step was to form a northern California chapter, an event urgently needed by Barnard in order to present Isaac Kashdan, president of the CSCF, with a **fait accompli** when the time came to form the Southern California chapter. It was assumed that the CSCF would fight the takeover, and one of the points covered in a report on the USCF meeting published in "Chess Voice" was whether it could be accomplished in time to beat the deadline of Nov. 1 for the CSCF to appoint delegates for next year.

At no time was anyone from the CSCF approached or consulted. I could have told them that there would be no difficulty with the delegates. "How," I could have asked, "did you yourselves get appointed? By the CSCF, of course."

John Larkins, editor of "Chess Voice," called a meeting at the Berkeley YMCA. Ralph Hultgren and Gunnar Rasmussen, treasurer and chairman of the board, respectively, of the CSCF, were able to attend. Some names for the slate of delegates were taken from those in attendance and a constitutional committee was appointed, consisting of John Larkins, Peter Prochaska (CCCA chairman), Richard Fauber (CSCF vice - president), Peter Andrews (Fiddlers Green bookstore), Jim Hurt (LERA), and one person to be named by the CSCF.

Now, what does all this mean to the California chess player? My answer is, "Not a whole lot."

The California State Chess Federation grew out of the North-South Team Match, where the active elements of California chess met annually on Memorial Day. Its aims were to promote chess and to hold tournaments, and the "California Chess Reporter" preserved records of its events.

The CSCF conducted the State Championship, the California Open, the California Junior Championship, the California Women's Championship, postal chess, the North-South match, and assisted from time to time in regional tournaments. At the same time, the member organizations, Southern California Chess League, San Francisco Bay Area Chess League, Central California Chess League (later Association) and other regional leagues and organizations, held tournaments and team matches.

All that I can see is that the two new chapters of the USCF will turn inward and label existing tournaments and perhaps some new ones with new titles, Southern California Chess Federation Championship or Northern California Chess Association Open Championship, for example. I don't see that a successful series of statewide championships is in the cards, unless the champions of North and South play a match for the state championship. In everyday activities I see the following changes for members of the CSCF who join one of the new groups:

1) Personalities will be different. Instead of dealing with Isaac Kashdan, Guthrie McClain or Ralph Hultgren, members will deal with George Koltanowski, John Barnard and Peter Prochaska.

2) The emphasis will be toward the big cities and the big money tournaments. There will be a difference between North and South. Barnard in the South can be expected to do more for his California Chess Circuit tournaments than for other events. In the North, the clubs in Berkeley, Concord, Fremont and other East Bay regions, plus the speed chess set at Fiddlers Green in San Francisco, will run things. (Jim Hurt of Sunnyvale will also be important.) The influence of the Mechanics' Institute will wane.

3) The days of the free ride are over. Chess officials will expect to be compensated for their time and expenses. (This is a nationwide trend; don't expect California to be different.)

4) There will be two official organs instead of one. The new ones will be more "bulletin" than "magazine." Instead of cross-tables there will be news reports. Instead of articles on theory there will be tournament circulars. Problems and endgame studies will be drastically reduced, if not eliminated. Notes to games will be short and simple, addressed to the average player. The magazines will be on time. (!)

A last word: When the first northern California formation meeting was held, there was talk that the new organization would end the "feuds" that existed. I suspected the old accusation that I held a grudge against George Koltanowski, but nobody I talked to would admit it.

Kolty assisted us in forming the CSCF in 1949-52. He was a principal figure at many North-South meetings. After a while he saw that his need to make a living at chess was not served particularly well by his involvement with the CSCF and so he dropped out and formed Chess Friends.

He discontinued his magazine voluntarily; this was why H. J. Ralston and I started The Reporter. My wife and I went on a chess tour of Europe with Kolty in 1953 and had a wonderful time. Someone must have invented the "feud." I wonder why Ed Edmondson has told people for years that it was my fault that Kolty was not involved more with the CSCF?

Someone mentioned the disputes that caused Martin Morrison to take the East Bay out of Chess Friends of Northern California, but surely that's ancient history. After all, Morrison is employed as Technical Director by the USCF and works closely with its president, George Koltanowski, the patron of CFNC.