

A REPORT ON THE PROFESSIONAL CHESS ASSOCIATION

By USCF Vice President Fred Townsend

April 12, 1978

The Professional Chess Association held its first Annual Meeting on April 8, 1978, at Lone Pine, California, on a free day between the fifth and sixth rounds of the Statham Masters-Plus Tournament.

American players in attendance at both the Statham tournament and the PCA Meeting included: GRANDMASTERS Walter Browne, William Lombardy, Anatoly Lein, James Tarjan, Pal Benko, Larry Evans, Larry Christiansen, Leonid Shamkovich, and Arthur Bisguier; INTERNATIONAL MASTERS Kim Commons, Ken Rogoff, Norman Weinstein and Michael Rohde; NATIONAL MASTERS Vitaly Zaltsman, John Peters, John Fedorowicz, Ron Henley, Tim Taylor, Julius Loftsson, Curt Brasket, Robert Gruchacz, Paul Whitehead, John Donaldson, Steven Odendahl, Perry Youngworth and Walter Morris. Also participating in just the meeting were Alan Benson, Max Burkett, Chris Carlson, Richard Fauber, Jerry Hanken, Edgar McCormick and Lindsay Phillips.

It was interesting to watch the American masters debate the objectives and purposes of the PCA, hammer out a PCA Constitution, and elect five PCA officers. The PCA Meeting ran a marathon 6.5 hours, compared to the five-hour playing sessions at Lone Pine.

The first 90 minutes of the meeting was thrown open to a discussion of general views and objectives. GM Tarjan made several emotional pleas which captured the attention of the audience, IM's Commons and Rogoff made several practical suggestions, and GM's Browne and Bisguier, and NM Peters, made many penetrating observations.

The open 90-minute dialogue closed any potential rifts, drew the attendees together, and constructed a consensus of opinion on PCA objectives.

A 30-minute recess was taken to enroll voting members (\$15 annual dues for any player who has ever held a 2200 Elo rating) and non-voting associate members (\$10 annual dues for anyone supportive of PCA goals).

Debate increased sharply in the next 3.5 hours as the proposed PCA Bylaws were amended and adopted as a PCA Constitution. In general, wording was softened on seven of the 17 proposed purposes of the PCA. When it was proposed to insert "United States" in the name of the organization, the chair pointed out that the Professional Chess Association had already been incorporated as a non-profit organization in Nevada. Provision was made for an Annual Meeting, and for the use of a mail ballot.

The final hour commenced with the election of PCA officers. A President and a Secretary-Treasurer will each be elected for two-year terms in even-numbered years, and three Vice Presidents will each be elected for two-year terms in odd years.

John Peters defeated Larry Evans, 16-14, for President. William Lombardy was unopposed for Secretary-Treasurer. A single ballot was used to elect three Vice Presidents (terms expiring in 1979): Larry Evans (26 votes), James Tarjan (21 votes) and Arthur Bisguier (14 votes), with other votes (totals unannounced) cast for nominees Walter Browne, Kim Commons and Jerry Hanken.

The chair then proposed ten motions for consideration, taking a straw vote on each. There were no votes cast in opposition to any of the ten motions for consideration, which included:

1. A Permanent Committee be formed to decide all matters for master events. The Committee would consist of 3 PCA and 3 USCF members.
2. A Finance Committee to explore practical methods of raising funds.
3. That the USCF be approached to assess a tax, of \$1 per player per tournament, to be given to the PCA for educational and promotional purposes.
4. A Committee for Central Booking with the USCF.
5. An Annual Masters Open and a Masters Tour.
6. A Committee to examine the rules of chess, and to recommend innovations to increase spectator appeal and public support.
7. A Committee to establish educational programs whereby talents of masters can be employed.
8. That the PCA go on record as deploring USCF employment and Chess Life & Review practices.
9. That the USCF confer Life Voting Membership on all FIDE titleholders.
10. That the US Team Championship be called the US Amateur Team Championship.

It was also proposed that (1) a finder's fee be paid on funds raised for the PCA, and (2) Kim Commons will form a Committee for a tournament clearinghouse (invitations to foreign events). Both proposals met no opposition.

Finally, James Tarjan asked for an open, bimonthly newsletter. Letters and rebuttals would be printed from any member. Analytical articles would be written on the highest possible level, for the strongest players, concentrating on the top U.S. players and their games. The newsletter would glorify master chess and improve the playing skills of PCA members. Non-masters would be encouraged to subscribe to the PCA publications.

LONE PINE 1978 broke all previous attendance records. 68 players entered, with 65 holding FIDE ratings. A majority (36) were foreign players. There were 23 Grandmasters and 14 International Masters, or 37 titled players, with an average rating of 2430 for the 68 players. Entry requirements may be raised in 1979 to produce a smaller field (say about 50 players).

I played a simultaneous against Grandmasters Oscar Panno and Bent Larsen, but it was on the tennis court, not the chessboard. In a Scotch Doubles match (they played one side of the net, I played the other side), Panno proved to be a great baseline retriever and Larsen a good volley man at the net. My blistered feet emerged with a 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 victory. Bring on Walter Browne!

CONNECTICUT CHESS FOUNDATION, INC.
10 BERMUDA ROAD
WETHERSFIELD, CT 06109

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