THE 1ˢᵗ COMPUTER OLYMPIAD, LONDON, AUGUST 9-15 1989

Ard van Bergen

The room held ineradicable memories: in this very location Karpov and Kasparov had played for the World Chess Championship. Against the same historic background, the first Olympic Games for computers became manifest. As an event, it was unsurpassed: entrants were no fewer than 88 and stemmed from 16 countries, Europe beyond the Iron Curtain making up more than its share. The sponsor was ACER, out of Taiwan, who had a long-standing record for sponsoring Go, – surely a Go-getter.

Computer-chess tournaments date back to 1970 when the first ACM computer-chess tournament was held. Nor was chess the only game to be tourneyed, and it seemed logical to bring all computerized games together. For instance, the alpha-beta algorithm is extremely useful in many games other then chess. David Levy, ICCA-President, deserves the credit for taking the initiative of this Olympiad.

For the computer-chess world, this was the second international contest in 1989, and indeed many faces seen in Edmonton showed up in London. Curiously, some of them had converted to other games. Jonathan Schaeffer, a computer-chess player by origin, entered the checkers tournament (8x8 draughts), Jaap van den Herik, surprisingly for a computer-chess fan, was involved in a Connect-Four program, while Ard van Bergen, previously sworn to chess, entered for international draughts (on a 10×10 board).

The *chess* tournament was won by Rebel after a fine victory in the last round over Fidelity. Rebel seems to be ready indeed for the microcomputer championship in Portorož. Two of the British amateur programs deserve mention as infants: E6P and Woodpusher were no older than three months and five weeks in the order named.

It is only a few months ago that the complete theory of Connect-Four was discovered. As a consequence, its true game-theoretical value became known and the question naturally arose whether, given this, the game was still worth playing. The answer was a definite *yes*, because, in game terms, a theoretical claim is beneath contempt unless proved in battle. Prospects for Connect-Four in next year's Olympiad, however, are dim because all of its problems have been solved. [May the Editors add: *modulo* any errors in theory or practice.] The next question, of course, is: assume Connect-Four is dropped from the ranks as being too trivial, which computer game is the next victim?

Following Olympic precedent, Gold, Silver and Bronze medals were awarded. Claude Shannon handed them to the deserving. Let us note that Dr. Shannon never failed to scrutinize the games and attend the presentations, however long the day. In order to stress that various games had common elements and could therefore benefit from interaction, a conference was held concurrently with the Olympiad under the Chairmanship of Tony Marsland. Papers were presented in a wide range of subjects, some directed at specific games, some more diffusely on the art of teaching a program to learn. All are to be published in *Heuristic Programming in Artificial Intelligence* (ISBN 0-7458-0778-X) to be edited by David Levy and Don Beal.

1.	Rebel	7.5
2.	Mephisto	6.5
3.	Fidelity	6.5
4.	Pandix	4.5
5.	Chess Player 2150	4
6.	HIARCS 4.1	3
7.	Echec 1.5	2
8.	E6P	1.5
9.	Woodpusher	0.5

It was a consensus among organizers, sponsors and attendees that this First Olympiad was greatly successful. It was decided there and then to start a new annual tradition by scheduling the second Olympiad for August 15-21 inclusive, 1990.

The adjoining table shows the final standings in the chess tournament.

Ard van Bergen: The 1ˢᵗ Computer Olympiad (Rebel - Fidelity)

Where the a-file is known as the West End. The 1st Computer Olympiad, London 1989.
(Photo by Jos Uiterwijk)

		Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1.	Netherlands	3	3	5	11
2.	USSR	2	2	-	4
3.	Taiwan	2	1	1	4
4.	USA	1.5	4	2	7.5
5.	England	1.5	3	3	7.5
6.	Spain	1	1	-	2
	France	1	1	-	2
8.	Wales	1	-	-	1
	Canada	1	-	-	1
	Switzerland	1	-	-	1
11.	Argentina	-	-	1	1
	Poland	-	-	1	1
	Czechoslovakia	-	-	1	1

Where the medals landed…

As an exciting glimpse from a decisive last round, we exhibit a game decided well within the first time control.

Rebel – Fidelity 1-0

1. d4 f5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Bg5 d5 4. Nf3 Nbd7 5. e3 c6 6. Bd3 Qb6 7. Rb1 e6 8. 0-0 Bd6 9. Ne2 c5 10. c4 Ne4 11. b4 Qc7 12. bxc5 Nxg5 13. Nxg5 Bxh2+ 14. Kh1 Nf6 15. g3 Ng4 16. cxd5 exd5 17. Nf4 a6 18. Nfe6 Bxe6 19. Nxe6 Nf6 20. Bxf5 Nf6 21. Kxh2 g6 22. Bh3 Tb8 23. Qf3 Qf7 24. c6 b5 25. Nc7 Kf7 26. Nxd5 Qd6 27. e4 Rhe8 28. Rfc1 Rxe4 29. Nxf6 Qxf6 30. Qxe4 Re8 31. Qxe8 Kxe8 32. c7 Kf7 33. c8Q Kg7 34. Rc7+ Kh6 35. f4 Qg7 36. g4 Qxc7 37. Qxc7 g5 38. Qf7 gxf4 39. Qf6 Black resigns.

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Related Weblinks: http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/hein_veldhuis/database/files/10-1989,%20CSS,%20Frederic%20Friedel,%20Sensation%20in%20London%20-%20Gold%20fur%20Mephisto%20Polgar.pdf

https://www.chessprogramming.org/1st_Computer_Olympiad#Chess

https://www.game-ai-forum.org/icga-tournaments/tournament.php?id=122

https://www.game-ai-forum.org/icga-tournaments/round.php?tournament=122&round=1&id=2