

Zurab Azmaiparashvili's Statement

From 2012, when I became the Deputy Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia, till nowadays, I have brought around 20 million USD for chess: We have organized top events like Grand Prix, Women Grand Prix (twice), Women and Individual European championships, European Youth and World Cadets Championship, FIDE World Cup and next year we are going to organize the Olympiad...

When a country and private sponsors invest such a big amount in chess, it is expected that it will be respected from all chess community and especially from the professional chess players who are the beneficiaries of the prize fund. Especially at the FIDE World Cup, for which we did anything possible (even took the loan from the Bank) to secure the chess players' prize fund 4 months in advance.

When we are asking for sponsorship and big prize funds then the professional chess players and their unions should also bear the responsibility to protect these investments.

It is not appropriate for a chess player to declare a day before that he intentionally came with only one shorts and that he is ready to leave, because he has other more important obligations. Indeed, he left the tournament as he stated that he wished to do so only one day before! (<http://chess-news.ru/node/2368> 1)

This is a top level tournament with 1,6 million prize fund and it is part of the WC cycle.

It is not a private or local tournament! It is not a youth event!

Such attitude is harming the organization through media and is preventing any future sponsor to invest in chess. This is a big damage to chess and its funding.

I have to dispel the confusion and say that nobody had told the player that he should be forfeited or that he could not play the game. Mr. Kovalyov was instructed by the Chief Arbiter as well as by the organizers, that according to the regulations he should have been dressed appropriately. But he was being ignorant. If he had just simply asked for our help, we would have sent a car to bring him some more clothes at our expense or even drive Mr. Kovalyov after the game to choose it by himself. What would be the problem in showing some respect to the organizers?

If I said some words, during a minute of an emotional conversation which followed, that insulted Mr. Kovalyov, I am ready to apologize and I would do it here as well as, in front of

him if he were here in his position, playing his games, as he was supposed to do. I have always been ready in my life to correct any mistake and I have no problem to do it in this case as well.

But the truth is that nobody told that he should be forfeited, nobody told him that he could not play and nobody told him to leave the tournament. This was only his intention which he revealed one day earlier.

And so, he left an empty board, a chess player without an opponent, damaging again the FIDE World Cup and its sponsors.

In social media, this fact has caused, in my opinion, incomprehensible reactions. Even a conspiracy theory was created - that all this was the reason Mr. Kovalyov left the tournament. It is absurd and even commenting on this subject is unnecessary. We respect each and every participant and naturally, we expect and demand from them the same respect and attitude towards the organizers and their colleagues. In spite of the fact, that Mr. Kovalyov's attitude towards such a prestigious tournament was frivolous to begin with (changing the flight dates in a force majeure situation), nobody had even reprimanded him.

I am waiting for Mr. Kovalyov to also apologize for this disrespect towards the organizers and towards his colleagues for withdrawing from the tournament and affecting its results.

So, I want to ask any interested party, in your opinion is it worth for sponsors to put such amounts of money for prize funds, promoting their image, when chess players have such behaviors and attitude?

And I also want to say that if Mr. Kovalyov denied receiving his share of the prize fund this makes no difference for us. We have already paid 1.776 million to FIDE and we need to present to our sponsors what is the service that they paid for.

And finally, I would like to say - I'll do my best to improve the image of our sport and the way chess top events look through mass media, including TV.

If we wish the sponsors to fund our tournaments and the media to promote them, we are all responsible to have an appropriate dress code for at least the official Chess World Championship Cycle competitions.

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