

Chess Notes

By Harold Dondis and Patrick Wolff
Globe Correspondents

We are favorably impressed by an article in the October issue of *Chess Life* in which Howard Goldowsky interviews Mark Glickman about the nuances of the chess ratings systems. It is the best summary of rating problems that we have seen. Mark is an associate professor at Boston University. He has made statistical analysis his life's work, devoting his time to health studies and serving as chair of the US Chess Federation rating committee since 1992.

The rating system, the chess equivalent of a school report card, is based on abstruse mathematical calculations that are beyond most laymen's understanding. But the basics are clear from this remarkable explanation by Glickman. The rating system is really an approximation of how a player will fare over the chessboard. The rating experts have a task of chasing a continuously changing situation, for the chess world is like the Greek sea god Proteus, who transformed his shape constantly to avoid the task of foretelling the future.

Glickman sets forth the rating formula and explains that a new rating consists of the prior rating changed by the difference between actual and expected results. He explains that the new rating is simply an estimate of likely results, whereas a player's true rating, based on the player's average performance, is not exactly known. Glickman has formulated his own system called the Glicko system, which attempts to quantify the uncertainty in the rating estimate. This system has been used in Australia and is probably applicable in areas outside of chess. The question lurks as to whether Glicko might supersede or alter the Elo system used by the USCF. This is an arcane matter for the experts.

However, Glickman's other appraisals of the rating system are worth noting. Under the present system, players cannot go 200 points lower than their maximum performance. Glickman says this

rule skews the system and he would substitute a permanent title, similar to that used in bridge, to designate a player's top performance.

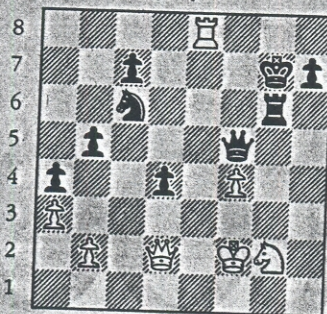
On the subject of the difference between the US ratings and those of FIDE (the World Chess Federation), the US ratings are 100 points higher. Nobody knows why, but Glickman sees no reason to unite the two. Glickman also says that higher-rated players are overestimated in the rating systems, so they do not profit from playing lower-rated players. Of the many imponderables in chess ratings, there is the problem of aging players, escalation of ability of players generally, surging performance of young players, and such things as Grandmaster draws to win a tournament.

In all these matters, Glickman is indeed wrestling with Proteus and his match is likely to be a long one.

Coming events: Two scholastic tournaments next Sunday, at second Central Falls Burger King, 800 Lonsdale Ave., Central Falls, R.I., four rounds, G/45, 401-334-1486; and at 10th Burger King, 77 Drum Hill Road, Chelmsford, 781-397-0919.

Chess Quiz

Shelby Lyman



BLACK GAINS A PIECE

Hint: Give a rook, get a rook.

Solution: 1... Rxxg2 2. Kxxg2 (attacks both king and rook) [Limontas-Volke '06]

This Day

► Today is Monday, Nov. 13, the 317th day of 2006. There are 48 days left in the year.

► Today's birthdays: Producer-director Garry Marshall is 72. Actor Joe Mantegna is 59. Musician Andrew Ranken (*The Pogues*) is 53. Actress-comedian Whoopi Goldberg is 51. Actor Chris Noth is 50. Rock musician Walter Kibby (*Fishbone*) is 42. Comedian Jimmy Kimmel is 39.

► In 1775, during the American Revolution, US forces captured Montreal.

► In 1789, Benjamin Franklin wrote to a friend, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

► In 1856, Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis was born in Louisville, Ky.

► In 1927, the Holland Tunnel opened, providing access between New York City and New Jersey.

► In 1942, the minimum draft in the United States was lowered from 21 to 18.

► In 1956, the Supreme Court struck down laws calling for racial

segregation on state buses, although Rosa Parks was a pioneer in Montgomery, Ala., bus sparking a boycott. ► In 1971, the *Mariner 9* began orbiting Mars. ► In 1974, Karla Frenkel, a union activist at Cimarron plutonium plant in Crescent, Okla., died on her way to meet her husband. ► In 1982, the Vietnam War Memorial was dedicated in Washington, D.C.

► In 1986, President Ronald Reagan acknowledged that the United States had sent "covert operations and spare parts" to deny the shipmen a deal to free hostages.

► In 1996, a grand jury in Tallahassee, Fla., indicted police officer Jim K. Lewis, prompting a protest to the streets. A jury acquitted police officers

Reflection for

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Reach thousands
of qualified candidates.

THIS BOOK HELPS ERASE THESE KINDS OF
NO MATTER WHAT SIDE OF THE LINE