

DIVCIBARE 2018: THE TOURNAMENTS THAT NEVER EXISTED?

BY GM VASSILIOS KOTRONIAS

As we are approaching the New Year, it would surely make no particular sense to report on tournaments that were played a couple of months ago, all the more so as writing reports has never been my forte and will undoubtedly continue to be so: I have been just a player and book writer for decades and basically there is no space in my life for other chess activities. However, this time there has been a strong instigator that prompted me to send this report: Potential injustice against professionals, something that should concern us all who are part of this chess world.

THE TOURNAMENTS

It all started before summer, when my good friend GM Mikhail Ivanov from Russia contacted me to inform me about the possibility of playing two GM tournaments at the Divcibare resort of Serbia. I had never heard of the place, and out of curiosity I enquired on the internet about it, only to find out that it is a place with few inhabitants situated near Valjevo, at a 3-hour's distance ride with a car from Belgrade, south west direction. The hotel that would host the participants was hotel Narcis which would be the playing venue as well, something that suited me perfectly as I hate moving around a lot just before the game. Thus, without any reluctance I accepted to participate after receiving all the necessary information about the event from FM Stefan Jovic, son of the main organizer Stanko Jovic.

The two GM events would be played in a row in a period from the 22nd of September until the 9th of October. Alongside with these events other tournaments would take place too. In these tournaments one could find the name of the legendary GM Heikki Westerinen listed in the participants, whom I had the luck and honor to meet after so many years. I had contested several games with Heikki a long time ago at the Gausdal winter resort in Norway, and while I had managed to obtain a plus score against him he had been a difficult opponent for me. Now it was not yet winter, but we were meeting again at a winter resort in the Balkans, only this time we were not playing the same tournament, yet still watching with interest each other's games.

The two - in a row - GM events were well organized, apart from the slight inconvenience that we often had to switch playing halls as many conferences took place in the hotel. They were a blend of youth and experience with young players from India, China and the Netherlands completing a field including several seasoned GMs. A small disadvantage for some players (like myself) must have been the fact that the field of the second tournament didn't change much compared to the first one, but I guess this suited better the organizers and the norm seekers who knew what to expect in the second event and prepare accordingly. Indian boy Praneeth Vuppala in particular, benefited a lot from this, as he managed to obtain an IM norm in the second tournament, displaying a huge improvement over the first event where he scored only half a point.

The star of the events proved to be a young lady from China, Wang Jue. She entered the competition with a modest rating, yet scored two GM norms and took 1st and 2nd places respectively. She lost only one game, to yours truly in the second tournament, but she displayed crystal clear quality chess and was rarely in danger in her games. In the first tournament, being unaware of her powers, I got checkmated by her after failing to insert a crucial intermediate move in an equal position, but that was rather a fair result as I had been worse throughout the whole game. Perhaps inspired by my blunder, I managed to crawl to a hard earned second place in the first tournament and in the second one, by virtue of my victory over her, we switched places. However, to achieve that result I had to withstand tremendous pressure as she was winning game after game, ending the tournament with 5/5 and ruining with Black in the last round the unbeaten record of fellow GM Bogdan Lalic.

Wang Jue was clearly a revelation, but not the only one to score norms. As I mentioned above, young Vuppala from India managed to score an IM norm in the second tournament while FM Anand Nadar achieved the same result in the first one. Congratulations to all of them. IM Max Warmerdam from the Netherlands played only the first event, but until I stopped him with the Black pieces he was a serious candidate for another GM norm and showed that the future belongs to him.

THE ISSUE

After returning home I enjoyed for a few days my good results in Divcibare and decided to play a tournament in Montenegro, where I suffered one of the worst results of my chess career, losing a lot of rating. I expected, however, my results in Divcibare to compensate for that as I had won there 19 rating points in total. To my utter disappointment I saw that the events in Divcibare had inexplicably not been rated in the November list and have not been included for rating by the Serbian Chess Federation since then, creating a lot of problems for all those who gained points and norms there. I contacted in written form FIDE and the Serbian Chess Federation but in the moment of writing this report I have received no reply. I even contacted the newly elected FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich by email, and this email still remains unanswered.

I think this whole situation damages me personally and my colleagues as our rating gains and norms have been withheld. I would kindly address all organisations involved in the issue to resolve it immediately as it is disturbing for professionals and the image of chess alike.

Meanwhile I will restrict myself to saying that having a rating below 2500 as a result of this issue seriously restricts my possibilities in open and closed tournaments as the conditions I am getting are becoming less and less. Not to mention that I wouldn't even like to think of being in the position of players like Prraneeth Vuppala, Anand Nadar, Tsveta Galunova (won a lot of rating in the non GM events, around 45 as she told me) and, last but not least, Wang Jue, who by adding two GM norms and a lot of rating points to her account would gain a huge boost in her career.

THE AFTERMATH

Divcibare is a beautiful place which can become a chess Mekka in the future, as it is surrounded by brilliant nature and there are people who would promote the idea of turning it into a chess centre. The organiser Mr Stanko Jovic and his son Stefan provided good conditions to the participants and hotel Narcis more than acceptable accommodation. I hope to have the chance to play in Divcibare again, but that is for the future to see. For the time being, give us our well earned rating points and norms!

To finish my article, I present a collection of games and photos from Divcibare, with some of the games including light notes. Before them, tournament results and crosstables can also be found.

PS. Just before submitting my report Mikhail Ivanov informs me that Oka Hikaru from Japan and Jovanovic Bojan from Serbia also scored IM norms in the subsidiary tournaments whose final standings can be seen right below:

FINAL STANDINGS NARCIS 1

Κατ.	Όνομα	Ελο	ΧΩΠ	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Βαθ.
1	Oka Hikaru	2086	JPN	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	7,0
2	FM Jovanovic Bojan P	2275	SRB	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	6,5
3	GM Andreev Eduard	2427	UKR	½	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	5,5
4	GM Westerinen Heikki M.J.	2282	FIN	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	4,5
	GM Ivanov Mikhail M	2367	RUS	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	4,5
6	FM Jovic Stevan	2164	SRB	0	½	0	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	3,5
7	IM Radlovacki Jovan	2312	SRB	0	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	3,5
	IM Sredojevic Ivan	2323	SRB	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	3,5
	FM Pantelic Sasa	2294	SRB	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	3,5
10	FM Ristic Nebojsa B	2336	SRB	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	3,0

FINAL STANDINGS NARCIS 5

Κατ.	Όνομα	Ελο	ΧΩΠ	1.Γύ	2.Γύ	3.Γύ	4.Γύ	5.Γύ	6.Γύ	7.Γύ	8.Γύ	9.Γύ	Βαθ.
1	FM Jovanovic Bojan P	2275	SRB	4w½	8b1	6w½	14b1	3w½	2w½	5b1	13b1	9w1	7,0
2	FM Zakaryan David	2378	RUS	6w½	5b1	14w1	3b½	4w½	1b½	8w1	9b1	11w½	6,5
3	Oka Hikaru	2086	JPN	5w½	10b1	9b1	2w½	1b½	7w½	4w½	6b½	8w1	6,0
4	GM Ivanov Mikhail M	2367	RUS	1b½	9w½	7b½	12w½	2b½	10w1	3b½	5w½	6b½	5,0
5	FM Pantelic Sasa	2294	SRB	3b½	2w0	8w½	10b1	11w1	6b½	1w0	4b½	13w½	4,5
6	GM Westerinen Heikki M.J.	2282	FIN	2b½	13w½	1b½	7w½	9b½	5w½	11b0	3w½	4w½	4,0
7	WIM Galunova Tsveta	2166	FID	14b-	11b1	4w½	6b½	8w½	3b½	13w1	-0	-0	4,0
8	IM Sredojevic Ivan	2323	SRB	13b½	1w0	5b½	11w1	7b½	9w½	2b0	10w½	3b0	3,5
9	IM Radlovacki Jovan	2312	SRB	11w1	4b½	3w0	13b½	6w½	8b½	10b½	2w0	1b0	3,5
10	FM Kokeza Mirko	2203	SRB	-0	3w0	11b1	5w0	13b1	4b0	9w½	8b½	12w½	3,5
11	CM Dev Shah	2146	IND	9b0	7w0	10w0	8b0	5b0	13w1	6w1	12b½	2b½	3,0
12	FM Stojkovic Mirosljub	2219	SRB	-1	14b0	13w½	4b½	-0	-0	-0	11w½	10b½	3,0
13	FM Jovic Stevan	2164	SRB	8w½	6b½	12b½	9w½	10w0	11b0	7b0	1w0	5b½	2,5
14	FM Ristic Nebojsa B	2336	SRB	7w+	12w1	2b0	1w0	-0	-0	-0	-0	-0	2,0

FINAL STANDINGS NARCIS 4

Rk.		Name	Rtg	FED	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts.
1	WGM	Wang Jue	2363	CHN	*	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	7,5
2	GM	Kotronias Vasilios	2505	GRE	0	*	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	6,5
3	FM	Anand Nadar	2394	IND	½	0	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	5,5
4	GM	Savic Miodrag R	2506	SRB	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	5,5
	GM	Lalic Bogdan	2403	CRO	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	1	5,5
6	IM	Warmerdam Max	2420	NED	0	0	½	½	½	*	½	1	1	1	5,0
7	GM	Kostic Vladimir G	2334	SRB	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	4,5
8	IM	Solomunovic Igor	2399	SRB	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	*	½	½	2,5
9	GM	Popchev Milko	2267	FID	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	*	1	2,0
10	CM	Prraneeth Vuppala	2281	IND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	*	0,5

FINAL STANDINGS NARCIS 7

Κατ.		Όνομα	Ελο	ΧΩΠ	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Βαθ.
1	GM	Kotronias Vasilios	2505	GRE	*	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	7,5
2	WGM	Wang Jue	2363	CHN	0	*	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	7,0
3	GM	Savic Miodrag R	2506	SRB	½	½	*	½	½	0	½	1	1	1	5,5
4	CM	Prraneeth Vuppala	2281	IND	0	0	½	*	½	½	1	1	1	1	5,5
5	GM	Lalic Bogdan	2403	CRO	½	0	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	4,0
6	FM	Anand Nadar	2394	IND	0	½	1	½	½	*	½	0	0	½	3,5
7	GM	Andreev Eduard	2427	UKR	½	0	½	0	½	½	*	½	½	½	3,5
8		Panic Nenad	2341	SRB	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	*	½	1	3,5
9	GM	Popchev Milko	2267	FID	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	½	*	½	3,0
10	IM	Solomunovic Igor	2399	SRB	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	*	2,0