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The 1st Chess Olympiad and creation of the FI(D)E - Getting organized (2/4)



[RetroNews](#)

24/04/1924 Le Figaro

by Jean Oliver Leconte

Second part of the articles devoted to the 1st Chess Olympiad and the creation of the FI(D)E.

Part one: [The 1st Chess Olympiad and creation of the FI\(D\)E - The first steps \(1/4\)](#)

While the organisation of the grand tournament starts moving forward, the newspaper le Figaro ironises.

Chess and the Olympic Games

There will even be a chess tournament during the Olympic Games!

It is being organised under the patronage of Mr Fernand Gavarri, Minister Plenipotentiary, Commander of the Legion of Honour, and will take place from 12 to 20 July in the salons of a grand hotel in the Étoile district.

Most of the major chess federations will be taking part.

After the Muscle Festival, it will be a small gala for the Brain.

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Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris - BHVP
Lucien Sauphar in 1919

In its bulletin number 11 - April May June 1924 - The French Chess Federation announces the Olympic tournament. The tournament venue changed. It moved from the Majestic Hotel to the Town Hall of the 9th arrondissement of Paris. It is probably thanks to Lucien Sauphar, mayor of the 9th arrondissement, that players will be able to play in this prestigious venue. A public venue rather than a private one.

Another important point concerns the status of the various participants. The Olympic Charter specifies that competitors must be amateurs. The text addresses this point and answers a question in the absence of an International Federation that would have set the rules beforehand.

The article also publishes the list of known participants as of 21 June 1924. Among all the competitors already entered, you will notice the presence of a woman from Great Britain, Edith Holloway, which is noteworthy. This is the first woman to play for a chess Olympiad.

- — FFE Bulletin number 11 - April May June 1924
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Here is the passage on the definition of the term "Amateur"

The rules, inspired by the fundamental principles of the Charter of the Olympic Games, stipulate that amateur champions of all nations entered in these Games may participate. However, the number of competitors is limited to four per nation. Ladies are admitted. Only nationals or naturalised citizens may represent a country. Prizes consist of medals and diplomas.

In the absence of an International Federation which would have been responsible for making a precise distinction between amateurs and professionals, the Organising Committee, in agreement with the F.F.E. Committee, has provisionally decided to refuse the status of amateur to any player who derives financial benefit from lessons, exhibitions, simultaneous games or blind games.

For the time being, it has been accepted that winning a cash prize, even a large one, in a tournament does not detract from this status, as it is a constant practice in chess circles to award cash prizes.

The same applied to the fact of having played interested games or having taken part in tournaments in which professionals were registered.

On the other hand, the exercise of a profession, liberal or otherwise, cannot be valid if the player exhibits himself on the side, as mentioned above, and thereby receives remuneration which takes on the character of a fee.

The title of Master is absolutely independent of that of amateur or professional; a Master can therefore be an amateur. It will be up to an International Federation to give a definitive ruling at a later date.

The following article, always taken from the bulletin number 11 of the French Chess Federation corresponds to the formal invitation to create an International Chess Federation. This is probably the first time that this congress, with the aim of creating the FIDE, is mentioned by the FFE.

_ FFE Bulletin number 11 - April May June 1924

Congress of Federations

The Committee of the F.F.E. has invited foreign Federations to attend a Congress to be held on Sunday 20 July 1924 in Paris. The French Chess Federation will first propose to this Congress the constitution of an International Chess Federation. This project had already been formulated in 1914 by the British Federation.

But the number 1 problem of the young French Chess Federation concerned its finances. James Conti, vice-president of the FFE and general secretary of Échecs du Palais-Royal (the former UAAR *Union Amicale des Amateurs de la Régence*) was asked to solve the FFE's financial problems.

He wrote

I am convinced that French chess players will find it mortifying to see Americans organising chess tournaments costing over 300,000 francs, while the French Federation's coffers contain only ridiculous sums. This is all the more saddening as millions are currently being spent on sports. Everything for the muscles and nothing for the brain.

_ Photo from the magazine L'Échiquier - January 1926, with the following text below the photo: Pierre Vincent general secretary of the French Chess Federation.

In the end, all went well, as Pierre Vincent recounted in the report of the event that he wrote for the FFE's Bulletin No. 12:

Bulletin n°12 de la FFE - July August September 1924
Pierre Vincent

"(...) Secretary General of the FFE for a short time, attached to the French Olympic Committee as Head of the Commitments and Technical Information Department, on his return from the Chamonix Games, enthusiastic about the sporting spirit with which competitors had registered and were registering for all the events of the VIII Olympiad. With the profound faith that chess enthusiasts would know how to make their tournament a success, in March 1924 I announced a tournament modelled on the Olympic tournaments.

To replace the French Olympic Committee: an Honorary and Patronage Committee, and an Executive Commission; appeal to amateurs only; no cash prizes; no travel expenses.

Without official support, it was risky, foolhardy and crazy, but it turned out to be perhaps the finest tournament ever organised! Thanks to all, supportive, benevolent for a hurried organisation, thanks to Paris that attracts, to France that we love, to the cause of chess that each player is happy to serve as a religion of which he feels the apostle for the development of intellectual and social virtues.

Fifty-nine competitors from nineteen different nations sent in their entries, much to the excitement

of the Committee. France's honour was at stake, so the reception was worthy of such unexpected eagerness.

Messrs Gavarry and G. Mesureur were able to interest the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which promised artistic plaques to reward the winners, and the Paris City Council, which reserved a magnificent reception at the Hôtel de Ville for the competitors and tournament officials. Mr Sauphar, mayor of the 9th arrondissement, donated the Salle des Fêtes in his town hall.

The Franco-Russian master A. Alekhine brought his high authority to chair the Referees' Committee. Devoted friends ("the iron team"): Léon Martin, Barberis, de Gency, Leturc, Gustave Lazard, Spanien, Judic, Mrozowski were on hand to take care of everything: medals, diplomas, tables, flags, programmes, invitations, clocks, press services, prints, checks, posting of results, photographers, etc...

The article was first published on [Le Café de la Régence](#)