

2024-07-05

The 1st Chess Olympiad and creation of the FI(D)E - The first steps (1/4)



_ The official FIDE centenary logo

by Jean Oliver Leconte

The year 2024 corresponds to the centenary of the creation of FIDE - Fédération Internationale Des Échecs. More precisely, it was in Paris on 20 July 1924 that FIDE was created (originally called FIE - The current acronym FIDE would be adopted at the 2nd FIDE Congress in Zurich, Switzerland in 1925, but the meaning did not vary: Fédération Internationale Des Échecs).

I propose to retrace this creation of FIDE, as well as the first Chess Olympiad via several articles. These two events are closely linked. Moreover, as we shall see, the idea of an International Chess Federation came after the launch of the organization of the international chess tournament alongside the Olympic Games.

This first part is devoted to the beginnings of the first Chess Olympiad.

To date, the FFE has said very little about this FIDE centenary event. [You can find an article on its website](#) here. But these events seem to me to be very meager (reconstruction of the act of signing the creation of FIDE and giant simultaneous).

There is no mention in these events, for example, of Pierre Vincent, the driving force behind the creation of FIDE. [His grave is in the Montmartre cemetery.](#)

[Wikipedia - Article on the VIII Olympiad](#)

The VIII Olympiad (Olympic Games) essentially took place in Paris from 5 to 27 July 1924. On this occasion, the fledgling French Chess Federation launched the idea of integrating the game of chess into these sporting Olympic Games.

This soon turned out to be rather short-sighted, as bulletin number 5 of the French Chess Federation tells us that the steps had unfortunately failed...And indeed, although this was to be one of FIDE's major objectives from its inception, it has still not been achieved....

Bulletin number 5 of the FFE - October December 1922

Chess at the Olympic Games

The steps taken by Mr Fernand Gavarry, President of the FFE, to have chess included in the programme of the 1924 Paris Olympic Games, although very favourably received in governmental and sporting circles, came up against inflexible regulations.

The programme of the Games was established once and for all in Lausanne and can only be modified at an International Olympic Congress convened by the International Olympic Committee,

which is the sole judge of whether lessons can be drawn from the Games of an Olympiad that could lead to a modification of the programme.

M. Léon Bérard, Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, in a friendly letter addressed to our President, says that, at his request, he has not failed to intervene with the French Olympic Committee and regrets that a "chess" section cannot be admitted to the programme of the games of the VIII Olympiad.

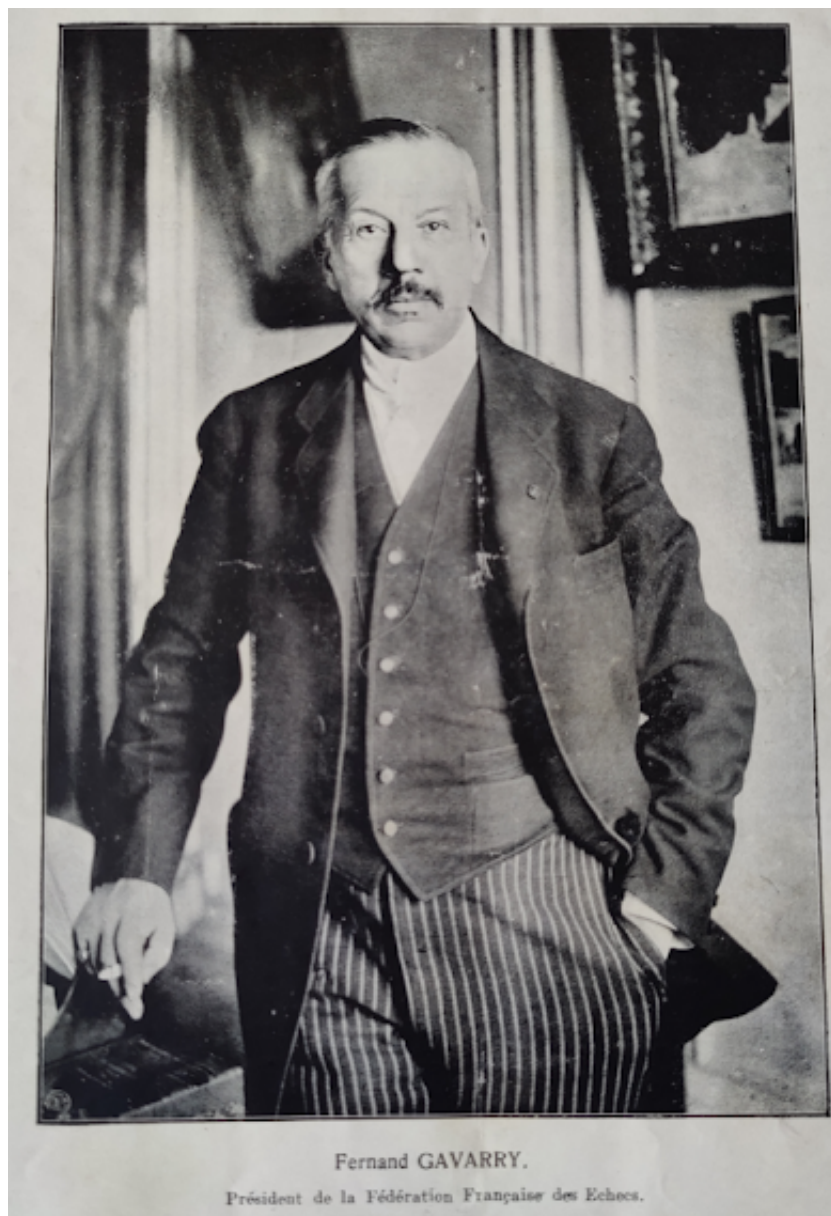


Photo Fernand Gavarry - Supplement to the Belgian magazine L'Échiquier, June 1925.

See the biography devoted to him by Dominique Thimognier on his website "[Héritage des Échecs Français](#)".

L'Action Française - 24/12/1922

Gaston Legrain, chess columnist for the newspaper L'Action Française, reported on this failure in the 24 December 1922 edition. The last sentence refers to the famous boxer of the time, [Battling Siki](#).

Talks initiated by the President of the French Chess Federation to have chess admitted to the programme of the 1924 Olympic Games came up against inflexible rules, excluding anything that did not directly involve muscles. Everything to Siki.

Nevertheless, the French Chess Federation did not give up and decided to organize a parallel event to the 8th Olympiad. The opportunity to honour the game of chess during this world event was not to be missed.

Bulletin number 8 of the FFE (July - September 1923) mentions an idea from the Russian master Eugène Znosko-Borovsky, who lived in Paris. The problem was essentially financial for the very young French Chess Federation. How to finance an international tournament in Paris when the FFE is penniless?

-

- _ Bulletin number 8 of the FFE - July / September 1923

-

- _ Bulletin number 8 of the FFE - July / September 1923

A few months later, a solution had obviously been found, as can be read in bulletin number 10 of the FFE. There is no explicit mention of an appeal to patrons, but it is possible to guess that this would be the only

solution. If only because of the location of the tournament: the Majestic Hotel was mentioned.

This venue was not chosen at random. It is a luxury Parisian hotel whose owner is none other than [Léonard Tauber](#), one of the main patrons of the French Chess Federation, and future president of that same FFE.

HOTELS DE PARIS
Fréquentés par l'élite du monde échiquéen
les champions du monde et les grands maîtres internationaux
lors de leurs séjours à Paris

Alekhine (Regina) Capablanca (Majestic)
Lasker (Regina) Marshall (Calais)

HOTEL MAJESTIC
Grand Luxe. Tout Confort
19, AVENUE KLÉBER PARIS

HOTEL REGINA
*Premier Ordre. Confort moderne
Vue sur le Jardin des Tuileries*
2, PLACE DE RIVOLI PARIS

HOTEL VENDOME
Grands Appartements. Grand Luxe
1, PLACE VENDOME PARIS

HOTEL DE CALAIS
*EN PLEIN CENTRE
A L'ANGLE DE LA RUE DE LA PAIX*
*Pension complète par jour :
60 à 70 francs*
5, R. DES CAPUCINES PARIS

Imprimerie J. Lechevreil, Mayenne — Le Gérant, Vice-Président, G. Gompertz

Advertising for the hotels owned by Léonard Tauber, then president of the FFE - Bulletin FFE number 47 of February 1931.

In any case, an organizing committee and an executive committee were set up.

An important detail in the title of the article in the FFE bulletin is the word "Amateur". The Olympic Games were strictly reserved for amateur athletes. But how to define this notion among chess players?

Comme dans les jeux olympiques, les prix consisteront en médailles et diplômes.

Les engagements individuels devront parvenir au président du Comité d'honneur, M. Fernand Gavarry, ministre plénipotentiaire, 14, rue Alfred-de-Vigny Paris (VIII^e), avant le 21 juin 1924

Le Comité organisateur n'intervient pas dans les frais de déplacement, mais il prendra toutes les mesures nécessaires pour les réduire au minimum. Il se tient à la disposition des intéressés pour leur fournir tous renseignements qui leur seraient utiles.

Deux comités ont été constitués pour l'organisation générale du Tournoi.

Un comité exécutif qui est composé de :

M. Conti, secrétaire général du *Cercle des Echecs du Palais-Royal* à Paris.

M. Delaire directeur de la *Stratégie*.

M. le Dr Faure, président de l'*Echiquier Toulousain*.

M. A. Gibaud, champion français.

M. Gustave Lazard président du *Cercle Philidor*, à Paris.

M. le capitaine Léon Martin.

M. P. Vincent, membre du Comité de la F. F. E., commissaire général du Tournoi.

Et un comité d'honneur pour lequel les adhésions suivantes ont déjà été reçues :

M. le capitaine de corvette Anglade.

M. le commandant Claude.

M. Fournier-Sarlovèze, député, maire de Compiègne.

M. A. Mesureur, ancien ministre

M. E. Pape, expert près le Tribunal civil de la Seine.

M. le marquis de Polignac, commissaire général des Arts au Comité exécutif de la VIII^e Olympiade.

M. Désiré Roustan, inspecteur d'Académie, à Paris.

M. L. Sauphar, maire du IX^e arrondissement à Paris.

M. Sévère, inspecteur général honoraire de la Banque de France.

M. L. Tauber, administrateur de sociétés.

M. le comte de Villeneuve Esclapon.

Bulletin number 10 of the FFE -
January / March 1924 - Continuation of the article with the members of the executive committee.

Note that there is no mention yet of the idea of creating an International Chess Players Federation on this occasion ...

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