

Lichess questions to FIDE

Q - When does FIDE see the Candidates resuming?

As soon as the conditions allow it. I think any attempt to answer this question right now in a more precise way would be pure speculation. Things change rapidly, and we need to keep monitoring how the situation evolves, particularly in the host country, Russia.

Q - Does the fact FIDE postponed the Candidates Tournament midway through the event mean Teimur Radjabov's criticism was accurate?

Not exactly. In his letter, he expressed his concerns about the risks of contracting coronavirus during the tournament. He was worried about being in contact with other players, with spectators, or with organizers. He expressed his concern about Wang Hao coming from Japan...

We had been monitoring the situation of each player individually: where they had been in the days prior to their trip, with whom, if they had any symptoms, if they had been in touch with anyone who had fallen ill... We concluded the risks were minimal and we were -and still are- quite confident in our assessment.

The tournament had to be stopped for reasons different to the ones he hinted at. Related, of course, but quite different.

Q - Is FIDE having discussions with Radjabov about either restarting the event with 9 players, or giving him automatic qualification into the 2022 Candidates?

At this point, and after half the games have been played, restarting the event is out of the question. The possibility of the tournament having to be suspended at some point was a plausible scenario, so this was discussed with the players before the Candidates started. It was agreed that if the tournament reached its 7th round, the results would stand no matter what.

As for giving Radjabov automatic qualification into the 2022 Candidates: it is way too early to discuss this right now. Many people have suggested this possibility, and the initial impression is that it sounds like a sensible suggestion that should be taken into account. But this should be discussed by the FIDE Council when they start working in the regulations for the 2022 edition. Now it is not the moment.

Q - Players have said they had concerns similar to Radjabov before the event and shared these concerns with FIDE. Did FIDE take the player's views into account when they decided to go ahead with the tournament?

We didn't get any claim from any of the players. Before the tournament, only Wang Hao mentioned on social media that he would not be happy to go to Russia. We did have a conversation with him and after he listened to the health and safety measures we were putting in place, he seemed satisfied.

What Radjabov did was the normal way to proceed: he wrote a formal email to

FIDE. We don't know if he was right or wrong at that point, and unfortunately, with the tournament about to start, he gave us very little margin to discuss and find a compromise. But he definitely followed the correct: he sent us a formal letter sharing his concerns and explaining his reasoning. We didn't receive any communication on that sense from any of the other players.

Q - Wang Hao, much like Radjabov, also requested a postponement before the event started.

[Answered in previous question.]

Q - Did FIDE consult with any health professionals about whether to go ahead with the event, and if so, who were they?

FIDE has a Medical Commission composed of 15 professionals: https://ratings.fide.com/fide_directory.phtml?content=22. They have been advising us since the beginning of this crisis, not only regarding the Candidates tournament, but already since middle/late January. They developed a medical security policy and protocol for the 90th FIDE Congress in February.

Pretty much like everybody else, we were following all the updates and recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO), and we were also in direct touch with the International Olympic Committee. These two organizations provided useful guidelines.

And above everything, we were in contact almost on a daily basis with daily the "Rosпотребнадзор" (Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing"), which is the Russian the federal service responsible for the supervision of consumer rights protection and human wellbeing in Russia. They are the ruling body regarding the safety measures in Russia.

Last but not least, we were also in contact with the Ministry of Sports of the Russian Federation.

Q - Did FIDE put financial considerations above the safety and security of those involved in the event?

Definitely not. Since actions speak louder than words, please note that we just took, without any hesitation, the decision to postpone the Olympiad. This was a much more costly decision, one that makes real financial damage. But in this case, we understand there were actual risks.

For the Candidates, with only 8 players, we simply assessed the tournament safe to go ahead.

Q - Was a cost / benefit or risk analysis done by a recognised professional on behalf of FIDE, and if so, who were they?

Again, we didn't look at this in terms of financial risks. We focused solely on evaluating the health and safety of the players. You don't put these two things in a

balance.

Now that the event had to be canceled, we have to evaluate the damage, reassess the situation, and talk with the sponsors and the authorities who supported the event. We must thank them for their understanding and their will to help to find solutions.

Q - If Russia had not decided to close its airspace, would the tournament still be ongoing, despite the increase of the pandemic to 500,000 infected globally?

As long as we could secure the health of the players, and the local health authorities allowed it, yes, we would have continued the tournament.

We contemplated the possibility of having most flight connections canceled. Same as it happens in Europe now, instead of having three flight connections per day between city X and city Y, there may be the case that there would be just one flight every three days. Or maybe we would even need to resort to a charter flight.

But the way the Russian government formulated this decision, suspending all flights including charter and private flights, left us no choice.

Q - The Vice-President of FIDE, GM Nigel Short, has made divisive comments regarding the safety of the tournament. Lately he wrote the "tournament has been halted not because it is dangerous, but because of the government decree and the cancellation of flights" - is it FIDE's opinion that Russia's decree was unrelated to the health risk the COVID-19 pandemic represents to its country?

While it is true that both facts cannot be dissociated, as I said before these two things are related but are not equal. Flights were suspended to prevent a threat. The players, who were already in Yekaterinburg, were not at risk.