

[PR6] ISC Proposals

1. Make the ISC great again!

Dear colleagues

The International Solving Contest was created about 20 years ago so that solvers from many countries can compete with each other in a friendly, not overly competitive atmosphere. Thanks to the many local events, we can participate without having to make an expensive journey, such as to a WCCC. And as there is no selection pressure, less strong solvers can also participate, even in countries with many strong solvers, where the selection for the WCSC or ECSC is difficult. It was soon recognised that the impact of the ISC could be considerably increased by creating categories 2 (for weaker solvers) and, later, 3 (for youngsters). I think that on behalf of many countries, I can say that the Swiss problemists always look at the numbers of participants achieved in these categories in other countries with a little envy and with a lot of respect for the hard work of the respective local organisers.

In recent years, however, disturbing things related to the ISC have happened:

- top solvers from some countries have travelled long distances to participate in the ISC
- the planned timetable has been arbitrarily disregarded for futile reasons
- problems presented were already public before the tournament had even started according to schedule
- some solving results have to be described, with some euphemism, as "peculiar"
- doubts regarding such results have been described as attacks against the respective country
- a lawyer was consulted to find the appropriate response to certain things
- reasonable decisions by the Central Controller were overturned

All of these points are, in my opinion, 100% absurd, go head-on against the spirit of the ISC and jeopardise its future. I propose to the WFCC to change the rules of the ISC so that the original spirit of the ISC can be restored.

Possible changes for reaching this goal include:

1 the Central Controller can decide to remove local competitions from the ranking list that (s)he deems irregular, in particular

- local competitions that do not adhere to the schedule for invalid reasons or without prior consultation with the Central Controller
- local competitions with many "peculiar" results

2 Decisions of the Central Controller are final

3 The ISC is no longer effective for solver ratings

Given the events of recent years, I find it hard to imagine that we will find a person willing to take on the role of Central Controller without an appropriate response. Points 1 and 2 express the trust that we need to have when we elect a person for this role. If this trust proves to have been too optimistic after a competition, we can always choose a different Central Controller for the next year. Once we have improved the rules, we can hope to be able to find such a person.

Point 3 counteracts the excessive ambition of certain participants.

--

Thomas Maeder

WFCC delegate for Switzerland

2. Proposal for Changes ISC §8 rule

Current text (§8):

"8. Appeals by solvers have to be sent to the central controllers who will decide in the first instance. In case of disagreement a 3 man committee with members of the WFCC Solving Committee will be appointed for the final decision."

Proposed replacement (§8):

"8. Appeals by solvers have to be sent to the central controllers, whose decision is final."

Justification for the Proposed Change

The current version of §8 is both redundant and contradictory for the following reasons::

1. **Contradiction with Rule §2:**

This rule explicitly states that *"the Central Controller is responsible for the overall organization of the contest."* If the Solving Committee can overrule the CC, then the CC is not truly responsible, and §2 loses its meaning.

2. **Contradiction with the Annex ("Tasks of the Central Controllers"):**

The Annex clearly includes *"decision on possible appeals by solvers"* as one of the CC's responsibilities. The phrase "decision" implies final authority — not just a first opinion subject to overruling.

3. **Legal clarity and structural coherence:**

Combining §2, the Annex, and §8 leads to confusion over who has final authority. Delegates, directors, and solvers cannot rely on a consistent appeals process when rules contradict each other.

Additional Considerations

- Only the CC has access to full information (timing of dispatch, local supervision, problem integrity, etc.). Therefore, decisions made by the CC are more informed than those of a distant committee.
- Appeals must be resolved quickly. Introducing a second layer of decision-making risks delays and weakens the CC's ability to enforce order and fairness.
- A single clear line of responsibility reinforces trust in the contest. When all parties know that the CC's decision is final, procedures become simpler, faster, and more accountable.

Submitted by: Arvydas Mockus, Central Controller ISC 2025

3. Statistical Criteria for Verifying ISC Results

The International Solving Contest (ISC) is held in a hybrid format: each country solves on its own territory under the supervision of local judges. The Central Controller (CC) coordinates the event, but the remote nature of the competition creates risks such as problem leakage, unequal supervision and solving conditions, and a noticeable increase in anomalous results.

The acceptance of such results leads to dissatisfaction among solvers, a general atmosphere of suspicion, and loss of trust in the organisers' ability to ensure the contest's fairness and transparency.

Some unresolved anomalies have been quietly discussed within the ISC community for years. The lack of clear action and failure to restore a sense of fairness have gradually damaged the contest's reputation.

I propose to give the CC a clearly defined, fully automated mechanism for detecting anomalies, based on the well-established **Z-score** and **Difference (Δ)** model.

FIDE already recognises Z-scores as a formal anti-cheating trigger (Anti-Cheating Regulations § 6.5; Fair-Play Regulations § 1.6).

<https://handbook.fide.com/files/handbook/ACCRregulations.pdf>,
https://handbook.fide.com/files/handbook/FPL_Regulations_2024.pdf)

a) Proposed Add to the ISC Rules(new §11):

(to be inserted after the current § 10)

11. Statistical Verification of Results

11.1 After each contest the STM automatically calculates Z-score and Difference (Δ) for every participant.

11.2 Anomaly – any result with $\Delta \geq 450$ Elo and Z-score ≥ 3.5

11.3 If an anomalous solver finished 1st–20th, the CC may refuse to accept the result.

11.4 The CC's decision is final; individual appeals are not envisaged.

I analysed all live WCSC / ECSC championships and Opens (2007-2024), a dozen WSC tournaments and all ISC events available in STM (2017-2025) - > 50 tournaments in total.

Not a single over-the-board tournament has produced anomalies exceeding these thresholds.

Only **three ISC results** breach $\Delta > 450$ & $Z > 3.5$.

Benefits

Transparency – Thresholds are public, fixed, and objectively calculated, eliminating speculation and subjective judgement. The system calculates everything automatically. This also protects solvers from subjective decisions by the CC.

Speed – One person (the Central Controller) makes the decision quickly. There are no long protest procedures

Prevention – If people know that results are carefully checked, they are less likely to look for ways to improve their score unfairly.

If delegates reject this statistical safeguard and anomalous results cannot be refused, the Central Controller cannot properly fulfil his responsibility to supervise a fair contest. In such a case, the CC- feeling responsible to protect honest solvers-should have the right to declare the tournament unrated if there is doubt about its integrity.

b) Proposed Add to the ISC Rules(alternative to a)):

(to be inserted after the current § 10)

11. In case of serious doubts about the tournament's integrity, the Central Controller may decide that the event remains unrated, in order to maintain fairness and credibility.

This authority aligns with the CC's mandate to safeguard the integrity and reputation of the contest.

It helps maintain the trustworthiness of the WFCC ratings without the need to question or reject individual results directly.

Submitted by: Arvydas Mockus (CC of ISC 2025)