

1. OTB play

Not much to tell. Since 2023 she didn't play any classical games, and only some small rapid tournaments. No impressive results, although consistent with her rating.

17 year old girl in a country in war for a few years. Not many opportunities to play. It is not uncommon that youngsters make big improvements (f.e. 600-700 elo in 2 years). Therefore we must be a little bit careful with making quick conclusions.

2. "Environment"

Youth chess is a world of parents, trainers, money, prestige... It's difficult to succeed in the very competitive world of chess. We must admit: ISC is one of the easiest methods to "force" matters.

In her answer to Arvydas she mentioned that she was training to get her "Master" title. This is probably not only important for her, but also for trainers and/or parents. But we can't see much OTB activity. What sort of "master title"?

3. Z-formula

As a non-expert I have two remarks:

- The ratings of the solvers must of course be trustworthy. This becomes an issue, because tournaments in Russia are not rated, and some solvers don't have much opportunities. With young players who can make a lot of progress in short time, our rating can sometimes not follow. Arvydas tried to correct this, by also given her 2100 elo and calculate the Z-formula again.
- When a tournament proves to be very difficult or very easy, the Z-formula can't tell everything. Maybe the strong solvers were desperately looking (and not finding) for the solutions of the very difficult problems, while the weaker solvers meanwhile solved the medium difficult problems and didn't look at the difficult ones. In an Open Tournament this is not unusual.

This ISC was very difficult, and one or two "lucky" shots could mean a very big difference in the ranking.

4. Difference with last year

- Last year we had 4 experienced solvers (with established ratings) who performed all 4 (and sitting in a separate small room) unbelievable good.
- This time we have a youngster (with maybe no trustworthy ratings) who performs exceptionally well.

5. Notation of solutions

Most of all I looked at her solving sheets. A lot to say about this!

a) nr 2 (#3)

This could be a “lucky shot”: “Not really see what to do after Kc4, bishop should be the key, nothing works, but some nice lines after Bg3. Maybe the gamble works and 1 or 2 points extra points in the ranking.”

Saw it many times on solution sheets. Although, I also can follow Arvydas reasoning, and his reference to computer output. And in her mail she tries somehow and not very convincing to make sense of all this.

b) nr 3 (#4)

According to me, she must have 1 point more! She wrote 1...g3 with the continuation which in fact is the threat. Nice if she did solved this. Benefit of the doubt.

c) endgames (I put them both together)

This, I don't buy. No way she outperforms dozens of strong/experienced solvers (and many of them with OTB titles.) If necessary, we can discuss this deeper, but this looks 100% computer output to me.

d) helpmates

Again, she outperforms many (some of the best) solvers.

Take the H#5. When you see one line, you will know that the other line will be something similar (probably switching B and Q). “Easy.” But the results of the other solvers indicates that this was not so easy at all. When you have one line, you will desperately try to find that second “easy” line. And still, many failed.

The H#3 looked difficult, but was mostly solved good. Here and there some solvers missed a line. She got everything. Benefit of the doubt.

But that's not the issue with the helpmates. Did you see how she wrote the solutions? In the first helpmate she starts with 1... and finishes with 4. #. This is the way f.e. Fritz writes the solutions of a helpmate. In the H#5 she uses the traditional method. Why did she do that?

In her answer to Arvydas she writes that she solves a lot of problems. I guess she must be familiar with the way solutions are written. Strangely, in the orthodox problems, she almost always repeats the key move. After solving “many” problems and having participated in solving tournaments, she must know how to write down everything.

In general, she seems to have troubles with this. Arvydas discusses this at length.

e) nr 9 (#5)

A very complicated Rehm. She is one of the 7 solvers with 3,75. Nobody got maximum. I don't know which line the other solvers missed. I follow Arvydas analysis of her solution.

f) selfmates

In the S#3, the threat is (again) buried in a line. And the lines Qd5 and Sd5 look to me more “important” (you first deal with these) than Se8. I see a lot of solvers with 4 points, and not many with 3. Makes you think.

General conclusion

1.

If we suspect foul play, than it was probably not the organizer. In fact, he missed 1,5 points. In nr 3 she should have 1 point more, and in nr 8 she had 7 of the 9 lines, and the local controller gave her only 3,5 points (Arvydas corrected this later to 4 points.). Although, the local controller gave her also 1 point too much for the second study (Arvydas also corrected this). It's a little bit strange that she didn't protest about these mistakes before the local controller mailed the results to Arvydas.

2.

Based on the solution sheets, I have a hard time to accept this as genuine. Even if she is a quickly improving youngster, her solving is very strange.

Because the tournament was difficult, some lucky shots can torpedo a “weaker” solver to the top. I mentioned that she outperformed a few times the best solvers. When she was outperforming almost everybody in the study, in the meantime she was also outperforming almost everybody in the difficult Rehm and Dobrescu.

Some solutions are clearly “computer”-inspired. About the studies: you will have a hard time to convince me otherwise!

As Arvydas already mentioned: the solutions don't look to have come from logical human thinking (threats, refutations, thematic lines, etc.)

If I am correct, she should finish third. And that without completely solving most of the problems (except #2 and H#). Most solutions are the key with some random lines. And by coincidence: mostly the first lines mentioned by chess engines.

3.

Like last year, the solver under investigation is not at all surprised about the exceptionally result, and is surprised about the investigation. And also the organizers in Poltava go immediately in the defence, in stead of giving clear answers. Just as if this result was normal. It wasn't last year, and neither it is this year.

Only Valery Kopyl seems to be a little bit embarrassed with the case.

My personal conclusion:

I can't accept this result for the ISC.