

REPORT ON MY CANDIDACY FOR DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE ECU
AT THE REQUEST OF DAVID OPENSHAW FOR THE ECF BOARD MEETING
JANUARY 19, 2014

I hope to do my part to re-establish and maintain civil and ethical behaviour in English, European and World Chess if for no other reason than that it will result in a healthier business climate for all chess. I cannot achieve this by standing on the sidelines, sniping. In accepting to participate as Deputy President in the ticket of Zurab Azmaiparashvili for President of the European Chess Union, I have chosen a pragmatic path to political success. I am not concerned that the rumours distributed by Nigel Short about Zurab (see text, attached) will 'tarnish' me as I have already demonstrated my own probity beyond question, under challenging conditions.

And, these accusations Short promulgates will not 'tarnish' the ECF because they are all baseless. To move beyond the *ad hominem*, let me first point out that the following statements by Short are simply false:

- Zurab "was present in London, staying at the Hilton Olympia, in December." (*He maintains this point despite Malcom Pein's telling him it wasn't so.*)
- "[A]ccording to the ECU regulations, Andrew requires the approval of the ECF Board to run on any ticket." (*Not the case. See Article 33(a) and (b) of the ECU Statutes.*)
- Zurab "Pull[ed] a knife on someone in the Baltics." (*Short provides no name, no place, no date. When I contacted Alex Yermolinsky, he refused to verify this anecdote.*)
- Zurab "behaved in a physically intimidating way to [NS] once in 2005." [*He is tall with a deep voice, so Nigel got scared.*]

and that the following phrases are in aid of demagoguery, not precision:

- [Zurab is a] brazen cheat ... a shameless individual ... a crook ... a thug
- [Andrew] will seriously tarnish the reputation of the ECF (*Worse than t-shirt-gate?*)
- [Zurab] rigged an entire tournament (*Yet, he cites one game.*)
- [Rigging a tournament] is about as corrupt as you can possibly get as a chess player
- Taking back a move [against Malakhov is an] even more heinous crime
- [Zurab is] strongly supporting Kirsan Ilyumzhinov (*Would weakly be better?*)
- [While Short was] staunchly supported by the British Chess Federation

Now I will examine one-by-one the remaining accusations Short brings against Zurab. Please note Short's recurring intellectual dishonesty and, ultimately, his hypocrisy. Short's arguments are presented in a bad faith which (absent hard proof) discredits Short himself.

1. Short claims that Zurab took back a move against Vladimir Malakhov in 2003

This is true, and Zurab freely acknowledged it; but a little more context is useful before judging this "heinous crime". Zurab noted a correct move on his scorecard, then made a different, illogical move on the board. When he realised that his move didn't correspond to the notation, Malakhov gave him permission to take back his move, which permission was freely and spontaneously given. Malakhov signed the scorecards, there were no appeals, and according to the rules of chess, THAT IS THAT!

From the Sun Sentinel (6/3/2005): "*In a sporting gesture, Vladimir Malakhov let FIDE Vice President Zurab Azmaiparashvili off the hook. Zurab changed his move to 25...Rxd1 and later won. But then, ashamed of himself, [Zurab] proposed a draw. Malakhov refused! He said he had no regrets about refusing to exploit a slip of the hand.*"

Zurab took back a move and acknowledged it; whereas in a sign of bad faith Nigel Short neglects to mention (for context) that Garry Kasparov once took back a move and has to date refused to acknowledge it, despite video proof.

From Wikipedia: *“The 1994 [Linares] tournament was also noted for an incident in which Garry Kasparov “took a move back” against Judit Polgár. Kasparov’s fingers briefly released a knight before he realized the move was a blunder; he then moved the knight to a different square. Polgar (17 years old at the time) did not protest and the arbiter did not intervene. Kasparov went on to win the game.”*

2. Short claims that Zurab butted an agent in the mouth in Calvia 2004

This accusation should be closely examined as it once again shows more about Nigel Short’s lack of intellectual honesty than about Zurab’s character (which in fact comes off very well in this story). Short has selectively quoted from a Spanish press release, which was quoted inside a ChessNews article. The same article tells an entirely different story that Nigel is fully familiar with; and a follow-up article reports that Zurab was cleared of all charges! Nigel is knowingly falsely accusing a man and (a somewhat lesser offence) misleading the ECF Board.

I recommend that everyone read in full the article (Chess News, 10/31/2004) that Nigel cites: <http://en.chessbase.com/post/scandal-in-calvi-fide-vice-president-arrested>

Below are excerpts representative of the full story; it should also be kept in mind that this encounter with security police took place in Spain six months after the traumatic Madrid train bombings of March 11, 2004 which killed 191 people and wounded 1,800:

From the lead paragraph: *“[Zurab] tried to get the attention of the organisers on the stage and was wrestled to the floor and dragged to jail by a group of security agents.”*

The context of the argument: *“Five time world champion Nona Gaprindashvili had arrived in Calvià to award a special trophy, named after her. [...] At the closing ceremony she sat patiently waiting for an opportunity to award the trophy.”*

Zurab’s motivation: *“Azmai informed Mr. Gelfer that the organizer has forgotten to mention the special Gaprindashvili award ... and [the organisers] refused to do anything.”*

What happened: *“Azmai tried to get as close as possible to the stage [to alert Ilyumzhinov], and this was when the security people stepped up in front of him. [...] [B]ut before anything took place, the security people had pushed Azmai back. I believe this is when the physical contacts took place.”*

What followed: *“The five or six security personnel, some of them in plain clothes, wrestled Azmai to the floor, completely covering him at one stage.” [see photos]*

Resumé from eyewitness Paul Truong, Captain of the American Team: *“The Calvià police said he hit them, that Azmai had butted a security person in the mouth with his head. However, as far as I could see, at no time Azmai was the aggressor. He defended himself when he was constrained by a number of security people. All he did was try to get the attention of the FIDE officials on stage, to correct the errors before the closing ceremony ended. I don’t think he did anything wrong. He may have been loud but I can understand his frustration. After all, this is the Olympiad, a premier tournament and it is inconceivable to forget to award or mention the most prestigious accomplishments.”*

Shortly afterwards: "Azmai was led by in handcuffs and put into a car, to be deported to another prison. Morten Sand was able to see him and says that he was quite badly injured in the face."

Short neglects to give the end of the story, also as reported in Chess Base (7/22/05), information that he is fully aware of himself: "Remember the brutal beating received by FIDE Vice President Zurab Azmaiparashvili at the close of the Chess Olympiad in Calvià, Spain? He was accused of having attacked members of the Guardia Civil, who were trying to prevent him from mounting the stage at the closing ceremony. Today at a court hearing in Mallorca the Spanish authorities decided to drop all charges."

We should not forget that both Garry Kasparov and Zurab Azmaiparashvili are passionate defenders of others' rights: Garry on the world stage and Zurab on the chess stage.



ZURAB AZMAIPARASHVILI ARRESTED BY SPANISH SECURITY FORCES WHILE DEFENDING THE HONOUR OF FIVE-TIME WORLD CHAMPION NONA GAPRINDASHVILI



ZURAB AFTER BEATING BY SPANISH SECURITY.

GARY KASPAROV ARRESTED BY RUSSIAN SECURITY FORCES IN MOSCOW IN 2012 PROTEST DEFENDING PUSSY RIOT.

3. Short claims Zurab rigged an entire tournament in Strumica 1995

It is true that nearly 20 years ago Zurab won an 18-round tournament in Strumica, Macedonia and indeed gained 40 FIDE rating points in the process. His ratings before and after the event, at his top and now were/are: 2620, 2660, 2702, and 2637, respectively. There have been unsubstantiated rumours which Short repeats that Zurab rigged the tournament by buying games from highly rated players to accelerate his rise in ratings so as to qualify for the 1997 Candidates Tournament. Short offers no proof. What actually happened?

First, we must rectify Short's bad faith elision (which, once again, detracts from the credibility of the rest of what he writes) that "*Bojan Kurajica - one of the participants in Strumica 1995 - subsequently admitted (in front of several witnesses) to having sold his games (New in Chess 2011/2, page 78-79).*" Yes, Bojan Kurajica is reported to have admitted (hearsay) to having sold games at some point in his life, but not in this tournament and not to Zurab.

Prima facie, the accusations seems hard to understand: Zurab beat Kurajica in Strumica 5-1. It is hard to believe that Zurab, then with a rating of 2610 (equivalent to ~2700 today), who had in 1983 beaten the then-World Champion Karpov, had to buy games from an average GM like Kurajica to beat him (whose ratings in 1992, 1993, 1994 were 2585, 2535, 2565, respectively).

Zurab's ratings rose steadily from 2655 to 2681 over the years 1993-2000 remaining steady at about that level until he stopped active play in 2006, peaking briefly at 2702 when he won the 2003 European Individual Chess Championship in Istanbul. The increase of 40 points is significant, but entirely justified by subsequent performance. The average rating of the players at Strumica was 2543; it would have been no surprise that Zurab won such a weak tournament while he was steadily working his way up the ELO ladder, especially as it was reported that a significant amount of alcohol was consumed by his opponents during the games.

A persistent rumour is that the games were never published because they weren't even played. It is true that the games were withheld for some time at Zurab's request as they used some chess novelties that Zurab had developed while part of Kasparov's team and he didn't want them revealed until after the Kasparov-Anand match in New York, 1995. However they have long been freely available, see www.365chess.com/tournaments/Strumica_1995

Another claim is that Zurab rigged the Strumica tournament in order to qualify for the Candidates Tournament held in Groningen in December, 1997 (two years later). With his rating at the time of 2650, he was the 22nd in a field of 100 Grandmasters qualifying. Had he retained his pre-Strumica rating of 2620, he would have instead been 43rd in the field of 100 and still easily qualified.

Funnily, there are two conflicting conspiracy theories about Strumica: the first that Zurab paid top level Grandmasters to let him win, but a second that Zurab was paid to lose (which he didn't) so as to raise Kutirov's rating. And, indeed, if one examines the results, a much more likely example of cheating at that tournament can be seen in the losses of Kurajica (2585) and Rashkovsky (2550) to Kutirov (2425). Results, respectively were 1-5 and 0.5-5.5. This contrasts to Azmaiparashvili's (2610) predictable results against Kutirov of 5-1.

As I see no statistical evidence, no direct testimony, no motivation and no proof, I see no reason to believe these rumours. The extensive 2003 interview with Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam in *New in Chess* that Short refers to indicates that the explanation for surprising results surrounding this tournament is that the Macedonian contingent was drunk much of the time; this has never been contested. (As this interview is not available online, see attached PDF.)

4. Zurab took Short to the FIDE Ethics Commission in 2007

Nigel nips like a little dog at the heels of others (and now me); occasionally they get irritated and give him a swift kick out of the way. This is the context for Zurab's complaint to the Ethics Commission, which he made in a fit of pique: you can imagine that a man might get a bit annoyed with Short at every opportunity, public and private, barking accusations that the man is a brazen cheat, a shameless individual, a crook, a thug.

Nigel Short has no consistent moral code of ethics, rather he barks anti-FIDE, anti-Ilyumzhinov, anti-Zurab bile to blot out the fact that he almost destroyed professional chess in the schism of 1993, an act combining towering egotism and base venality. To illustrate this, there are two important points in Short's email that arise unintentionally:

1. Short complains about this Ethics Commission appeal taking "several wasted weeks of legal process" while the elephant in the room remains his bullying and misleading the English Chess Federation into fronting for Kasparov in a frivolous/spurious lawsuit against FIDE costing FIDE EUR500,000 which might have otherwise been spent on chess. This was one of three such cases — all thrown out — forming part of Kasparov/Danailov's strategy which had the explicit goal of bankrupting FIDE.

2. In the same article in which Short accused Zurab of cheating (taking back a move), Short also attacked the man he now supports for President of the ECU, Silvio Danailov (caught on video passing moves to a player during a game):

"[Nigel Short tells us that it is his] understanding that the majority of players in San Luis privately believe that Topalov received signalling from Danailov during play. [...] I was quite struck by the fact, that Danailov sat in close physical proximity to Topalov during play. Furthermore, his not infrequent entering and exiting the hall would have provided facile opportunities for receiving communication from a third party. [...] I believe there is a clear case for setting up an independent committee of decent honorable people to examine the dozens of hours of TV footage from San Luis. ..."

For the original article, see: <http://www.dnaindia.com/sport/report-short-take-veselin-topalov-could-have-been-cheating-1077079>

5. Short's Hypocrisy

Many consider his venal association with Garry Kasparov that resulted in a 12-year schism in World Championship Cycle to be the Original Sin of recent chess history. He now supports the same Garry Kasparov who is today offering inducements large and small to win the 2014 FIDE Presidential elections; the same Garry Kasparov who undermined the future of chess sponsorship in 1996 by triple-dipping with Microsoft, IBM and Intel; the same Garry Kasparov who tried to sabotage Anand's last two Championship Matches simply because Anand refused to endorse Karpov for the 2010 FIDE Presidential Elections. The same Garry Kasparov who, as Short himself would put it, committed the 'heinous crime' of 'cheating' during his game against Judith Polgar in 1994. The list goes on of Garry's failures away from the board.

He supports (against Zurab) for President of the ECU Silvio Danailov who is responsible for (according even to Short) the second great blot on recent chess history, Toiletgate (Elista 2006), and a third stain that will not go away: the recurring (unlikely and unproven though they are) accusations supported by video footage of cheating by supplying moves to Topalov during play (San Luis, Argentina 2005; Wijk aan Zee 2007). Outside of the range of the game of chess it should be noted that Short's candidate has spent six months in jail for arms dealing (materiel stolen from the Bulgarian army) and as President of the ECU he tried to extract a EUR50,000 payoff from me in return for having introduced me to the Mayor of Madrid.

Aside from supporting men of dubious character, Short's own most egregious shortcomings have generally to do with sex. He boasted in Tony Miles' 2001 obituary in The Telegraph: "I obtained a measure of revenge not only by eclipsing Tony in terms of chess performance but also by sleeping with his girlfriend, which was definitely satisfying but perhaps not entirely gentlemanly."

6. Conclusion

Why is Zurab the object of these attacks if he is so pure? Of course Zurab is not pure; nor are any of us! But, is there no fire where there is smoke? Why these persistent, if unsubstantiated, rumours? The answer is that the smoke comes from another fire, elsewhere.

For years these guys were all swimming in the same pool: Zurab and Nigel (drew in 1983, Zurab coached Garry in Kasparov-Short 1993), Zurab and Kasparov (long-time trainer and friend), Zurab and Danailov (political ally in wars against Kirsan). And Zurab is a likeable guy, why not be friends with him.

But when he decided to get into politics as a Vice President of FIDE, this all changed. His former friends dug up these old stories using him as a straw man to attack Kirsan. It is difficult to overestimate the loathing that Kirsan inspires in some chess circles.

Now Zurab Azmaiparashvili is leading a European Chess Union ticket that is perceived to be pro-Kirsan, anti-Kasparov and his former friends have renewed the attack using Short as the tool of choice.



Zurab with Short.



Zurab with Garry.

**TEXT OF 5/1/14 EMAIL FROM NIGEL SHORT TO ECF BOARD
REGARDING MY PARTICIPATION IN THE ECU TICKET WITH
ZURAB AZMAIPARASHVILI**

Running on the ticket of a notorious, brazen cheat like Azmaiparashvili would, however, seriously tarnish the reputation of the ECF. You have not been in the chess world for very long, so perhaps you are unaware that he rigged an entire tournament in Strumica 1995 in order to fraudulently qualify for the World Championship cycle by artificially boosting his rating. That action is about as corrupt as you can possibly get as a chessplayer, unless you can consider taking back a move, against Malakhov, to win the 2003 European Championship to be even more heinous crime.

This shameless individual took me to the FIDE Ethics Commission, in 2007, after I accused him of being a cheat in the Indian newspaper, DNA. I am glad to say I was staunchly supported by the British Chess Federation at the time. The evidence I presented to the Commission depended largely upon Azmai's own words (New In Chess interview 2003/5, pages 36-42). You can read the judgment here <http://www.fide.com/news/download/Judgement02-07.pdf> Needless to say, my defence was upheld by the Commission and they dismissed the case, although after several wasted weeks of legal process, I did receive a warning for the minor violation of referring to him as a "dunderhead" - which, I suppose, is almost as rude referring to someone as a "pain in the ass". As an addendum: Bojan Kurajica - one of the participants in Strumica 1995 - subsequently admitted (in front of several witnesses) to having sold his games (New in Chess 2011/2, page 78-79).

As well as being a crook, Azmai has [sic] a thug. I refer you to the statement of the organisers of the 2004 Calvia Olympiad (copied from the "ChessBase" website):

"The Vice President of the International Chess Federation (FIDE) Zurab Azmaiparashvili, has been arrested this afternoon during the Closing Ceremony of the XXXVI Chess Olympiad Calvia 2004, after having assaulted a policeman. He is now waiting a judicial resolution

Azmaiparashvili wanted to go up on the stage and this was not included in the protocol. When the policeman tried to dissuade him, he butted the agent in the mouth."

The American Grandmaster Alex Yermolinsky informed me he once witnessed Azmai pulling a knife on someone in a Baltic nightclub. For what it is worth, he has also behaved in a physically intimidatory manner towards me, in San Luis, Argentina, 2005.

If this were not disqualification enough, one also has to consider the fact that Azmai is strongly supporting Kirsan Ilyumzhinov in this year's FIDE Presidential Election.

Given that Azmai was present in London, staying at the Hilton Olympia, in December, and that you had already indicated that you might well run on his ticket, it is a surprise that you did not wish to introduce him to ECF Board.