

Restricting the Ability of Players to Play Up

2012-06 Mark Kaprielian

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I. Authors

A. Initial Document:

Mark Kaprielian

B. Subsequent contributors:

None

II. Purpose of the Topic

The purpose of this topic is to discuss what policies regarding the ability of a player to play up into a higher section the club should have in place.

From time to time we as a club (the TDs or the President) are asked why we allow lower rated players to play up one or more sections. This question is invariably asked with the suggestion that we should have some kind of restriction in place. In the last six months we have been asked this at least three times.

III. Objectives

- To evaluate and document possible policy changes that could be instituted to achieve the goals set out by this document
- To make recommendations which adhere to the operational philosophy of the club, namely:
 - New programs must be person resourced from the membership such that they do not draw people resources from existing programs
 - Policies and practices shall be created so that it is simple to determine the outcome or results of applying them without depending on historical data being maintained as much as is possible.
 - Policies and practices shall avoid placing additional burden on Tournament Directors and programs volunteers.
- Any policies resulting from this topic discussion should be a best attempt to balance an individual player's desire to occasionally challenge themselves with the collective player's expectations of having a reasonably good opponent and an interesting game.
- Policies should be robust and as immune from particular numbers as possible. E.g. Attendance fluctuations, section floor changes, sections being added or removed.

- Policies should be designed such that they do not need constant or frequent revisiting.

IV. Existing Policy statements under consideration or highly relevant to the discussion

Reference: MCC_P&P_Program_Monthly_Tournaments_2011-12-10

- Currently there are no rules restricting the ability of a player to play up into another section.
- Re-entries are not allowed

V. Previous motivations for changes

This is the first time this topic has been formally discussed.

VI. Background Information

- The U1400 section typically has the most players playing up. See data below
- From observation, there are usually four to six players in the Open section that are young players with ratings of 1800 or higher
- From Observation, many of the young players in the Open section are initially in the 1700 to 1850 range when they start playing in the Open section and most of these players will have a 1900 to 2100 rating after six or so months playing in the Open section. Most of these players are actively taking coaching lessons from Experts or Masters. Often close to half of the Open section is made up of these players.
- Win Expectations for the higher rated player:
 - 100 points difference – 64%
 - 200 points difference – 76%
 - 300 points difference – 84%
 - 400 points difference – 92%

Below are statistics on how many players played up into a section. It does not reveal how many played up more than one section.

Example: In the table below, for the January 2011 event,

- 33% of the players in the U1700 section were from the U1400 section
- 25% of the players in the U2000 section were from a lower section
- 27% of the players in the Open section were from a lower section

Month	U1700	U2000	Open
01/11/11	33%	25%	27%
03/01/11	48%	28%	30%
04/05/11	42%	20%	26%
05/03/11	52%	38%	37%
06/07/11	48%	21%	26%
07/05/11	45%	17%	29%
08/02/11	43%	23%	31%
09/06/11	35%	24%	46%
10/04/11	47%	15%	33%
11/01/11	40%	37%	23%
12/06/11	32%	11%	26%
01/03/12	33%	17%	18%
02/07/12	33%	10%	20%
03/06/12	20%	13%	20%

04/03/12	31%	18%	29%
05/01/12	41%	35%	41%

Below are the actual counts of how many played up in each section

Month	U1700	U2000	Open	Grand Total
01/11/11	6	4	4	14
03/01/11	11	8	6	25
04/05/11	10	4	5	19
05/03/11	12	6	7	25
06/07/11	16	5	6	27
07/05/11	14	3	7	24
08/02/11	10	5	8	23
09/06/11	9	4	6	19
10/04/11	14	3	4	21
11/01/11	12	7	3	22
12/06/11	8	2	5	15
01/03/12	11	4	3	18
02/07/12	11	2	3	16
03/06/12	6	3	3	12
04/03/12	10	3	4	17
05/01/12	12	6	7	25

VII. Motivations for changes put forward by this document

A. Reasons expressed as to why we should have restrictions

- They do not want to play much lower rated players. They are looking to have a reasonably challenging match each week.
- When a large percentage of lower rated players make up the section it becomes much more like a single section where from week to week the level of the opponent can vary a great deal. This is a characteristic of smaller clubs where there are not enough players in each range to make it fair and challenging for most of the players.
- They feel that Masters and Experts will be less inclined to play in our Open section when there are much lower rated players regularly playing in the section.
- Criticism has not been limited to players playing up into the Open section. Players in the U1700 and U2000 have also spoken up about lower rated players playing up.
- We have had players request to be dropped into a lower section after having played one or two rounds. This conflicts with the no re-entry policy.

B. Reasons to not create restrictions

- For players who are at a stable rating, meaning, their rating doesn't generally move up or down much, playing up allows them to get some additional challenge from time to time or to escape playing the same lower rated players again and again.
- For those with not stable ratings, generally young players, teenagers and a few adults who've played for years but never rated chess, playing up allows them to go more directly to where their ratings are going to settle out.
- The coaches of young players often direct their students to play in higher sections as part of their teaching process and to accelerate the player achieving a higher rating.
- Very seldom do we see players playing up if they are not successful. Players who play up when outclassed tend to self-correct the situation by returning to a less challenging section.

C. External considerations

Some tournaments restrict players to playing up one “class”. The USCF class system essentially has a new class every 200 points. To see an example, look at the clubs “who’s playing” page and mentally remove the word “Advanced” out of the titles. The MCC does not create its section breaks regarding the USCF class titles. What is of most significance for the upcoming discussion is that the effect is that the restriction is of 200 points.

VIII. Outline of Possible Solutions

To offer solutions we need to provide some context to frame the solutions. For the following suggestions we will initially limit our discussion with the following parameters:

- Monthly events always have Four sections
- Sections floors may vary as they have in the past but which are not currently being varied.
- Players have established USCF ratings. Separate considerations will likely be needed for Unrated, Provisionally rated or FIDE rated but no USCF yet.

Possible Solutions:

A. No Restrictions

This is the current practice. By lack of explicit policy players are currently allowed to play in any section any number of times with no restrictions on them playing up again.

B. May Play up One section

A player with a rating < 1400 may play in the U1700 section

A player with a rating < 1700 may play in the U2000 section

A player with a rating < 2000 may play in the Open section

C. May Play up Two sections

A player with a rating < 1400 may play in the U1700 or the U2000 section

A player with a rating < 1700 may play in the U2000 or the Open section

D. May Play up if within “N” rating points of a higher section floor

If the value of N is “small” then the effect is to be more restrictive than being allowed to play up one section. If the value of N is “large” then the effect is more like that of being able to play up two sections.

Example if N if 100 points

- A player with a rating 1300 to 1399 may play in the U1700 section
- A player with a rating 1600 to 1699 may play in the U2000 section
- A player with a rating 1900 to 1999 may play in the Open section

Example if N if 200 points

- A player with a rating 1200 to 1399 may play in the U1700 section
- A player with a rating 1500 to 1699 may play in the U2000 section
- A player with a rating 1800 to 1999 may play in the Open section

Example if N if 300 points

- A player with a rating 1100 to 1399 may play in the U1700 section
- A player with a rating 1400 to 1699 may play in the U2000 section
- A player with a rating 1700 to 1999 may play in the Open section

Note that this is the same as allowing playing up 1 section except for the lowest section.

Example if N is 400 points

- A player with a rating 1000 to 1399 may play in the U1700 section
- A player with a rating 1300 to 1699 may play in the U2000 section
- A player with a rating 1600 to 1999 may play in the Open section

E. May Play up for one or some other designated number of events but must Win or draw some number to play up again.

The idea here is that anyone can try playing up in a section at least once but must obtain satisfactory results to be allowed to play up into that section again.

This approach will require book keeping on potentially every player for every section that they may try which strongly violates the operational philosophy of the club as stated previously.

IX. Discussion

It seems reasonable to allow people who wish to challenge themselves to play up. It also seems reasonable to provide for the greater good of the players and the club to prevent wildly unbalanced matches.

Of the possible solutions offered two seem to meet the philosophical goals of the club and the desire to meet the needs of the individual and the larger collection of players:

- May Play up One section
- May Play up if within "N" rating points of a higher section floor

Both of these allow players to play up while providing some restriction on how far up.

Both of these can be easily determined by both the player and TDs at time of registration and can be double checked before pairings are completed.

We now need to see if both solutions hold up well when we consider altering the framework we created to have this discussion so far. Points to now consider include:

- A fifth section is added due to restructuring
- The event has three sections possibly due to restructuring
- The event has three or less sections due to the need to merge sections for an event.
- A provisionally rated player feels he can compete better in a higher section
- An unrated player with no previous ratings that can be found wished to play in a high section
- An unrated player who says he had a high rating in his former country but not a FIDE rating wished to enter a high section.
- It is very possible that the sections floors are not always separated by the same amount. For example the separations could be 400, 300 and 200 or 350, 300 and 200. This becomes more likely if a fifth section is added.

Considering the points above the Play up within "N" approach may not hold up well when the number of sections or the section floors are changed. Currently the section floors are 300 points apart. Small values of N such as 100 points will probably still work well whether more sections are added or removed. It is not likely that sections would ever be any closer than 200 points apart. If N were selected to be 200 and the sections were 200 points apart then the effect is that the policy turns into play up one section.

A disadvantage of the play up One section is that the larger the section floor spread is the lower the rating can be of the person playing up.

As noted earlier, if N is “small” it is harder for someone to be able to play up. 100 points for N seems to be too restrictive and is essentially the section floor. 200 points makes a player get part way to the next section. Note that 200 points is similar to external tournaments where they restrict by “class”.

If someone is unrated and they feel that they should be playing in a high section, if we allow them to do this then the worst case scenario would be that they are allowed to play in too high a section for two months as that is how long it will take for their rating to catch up. This could be reduced by allowing the chief TD to use the unpublished provisional rating to restrict the section the player may play in.

For provisionally rated players, if they had good results early then their provisional rating would be high enough to qualify them to play in higher sections. It may be that their rating is artificially low because they made the mistake of playing in tougher sections elsewhere. This means they might actually be 1500 or 1600 players or possibly higher who have a rating under 1200 because they did not win any games. These players under the N points scenario would be stuck longer in the bottom section than if we use the play up one section approach.

X. Summary

The overall opinion of the Board and TDs after discussing the various points present in this document no strong consensus to change the existing policy was reached. The ideas that things would players would self-correct over time was and the negative impacts that could be avoided out-weighed the perceived benefits and operational burdens. Also, the number of persistent long-time to corrected incidents has been very low.

The best choices if we are to apply any restrictions appear to be:

- May play up one section
 - Pro - Simple rule not impacted by much of anything
 - Con - The larger the section the lower the rated player that can play up
- Must be within N where N is 200 points
 - Pro – More restrictive than up one section
 - Con – Sensitive to changes in section sizes and number of sections

Additional types of rules needed regardless of which approach is taken:

- Provisionally rated players are subject to the same policy as rated players
- Unrated players may enter any section. Once they have a provisional rating, even though not published, it is at the discretion of the chief TD to use this not published provisional rating as though it were published for the purpose of determining the restriction of the section the player may play in.

XI. Comments not merged into the topic above

TBD