

Text by:
IA Alon Shulman,
ECU Arbiters Council
member



My experience as a Fair Play Officer at the World Junior (U-20) Championship in Sardinia - Part 2

The air pods incident

The 6th round of the championship looked like any of the other previous rounds. The tournament was progressing in order and players and staff were anticipating the free day tomorrow for a well deserved rest or excursions, as you please. Players were already accustomed to the routine pre-round scanning prior to the 15:30 starting of games. so as usual 90% would arrive at 15:29

Around 19:40 one of the arbiters had escorted one of the female players for a random check. The lady was one of the 3 ladies selected for that day. Everyone of the team knew their part. I walk first with the keys. The player walks after me and the lady checker trails. The instructions for the arbiters and FP arbiters were clear. Once a player is informed about the post game scan, you don't take your eyes off him/her and you make sure the player collects everything he/she came in with. We will not allow an opportunity for a violator to discard of a forbidden item.

After opening the room I would allow the player and checker in. Then, leave the room and close the door. The lady scanner would conduct her check and open the door when it's completed. After reentering the room, the lady checker would inform me the result of check and I would decide further. For some reason I decided to check player's jacket which was on the couch. Our FP lady scanned it with the metal detector but there were lots of metal parts in the jacket so the beeps were interpreted as legit metal beeps. I decided on a jacket pat down search. There I found the air pods. The look of shock and horror on player's face was obvious. It seemed she was truly shocked.

Now, FP team colleagues, remember, you also have an investigative duty. If an unpermitted item is found in a possession of a player, ask immediately the necessary questions:

- > Is the item yours?
- > Is the jacket yours?
- > Did you put the item in the jacket?
- > What is it used for?
- > Why is it there?

Those statements, obtained from the player in the initial stage, would not allow the suspected FP violator to build up a story and try and distance themselves from the forbidden item/s. In our case, the lady seemed to be truthful and genuine throughout the ordeal. There was an acceptance of responsibility by her from the start. The facts of the matter were established and all was left is to submit them to the chief arbiter with my statement of events. My job regarding this matter was completed upon doing so. We, the FP team, are like a police investigative division while the Chief Arbiter performs as district attorney and judge.

The outcome of the event was that lady's win that was reversed to a loss and an expulsion from the tournament. An appeal which was submitted by the player and her federation was unanimously rejected.

Arbiters Corner

IA Alon Shulman, ECU Arbiters Council member, was appointed as the Fair Play arbiter at the World Junior (U20) World Chess Championship 2022 in Sardinia. He wrote two articles sharing his experiences from the event. My experience as a Fair Play Officer at the World Junior (U-20) Championship in Sardinia - Part 1 can be found in ECU Magazine December 2022 issue.



Photo from Official website of the FIDE World Junior (U20) Chess Championship: <https://www.fideworldjunior2022.com/>

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I was aware to the heightened emotions in social media about what many people saw as a too severe punishment. Everyone is entitled to an opinion and in the emotional level it is easy to associate with a pleasant lady than a faceless entity like FIDE or organizers. Without prejudice, I would like to present the arguments less emphasized in social media.

FP violations are a thorn at the tournament experience. The pressure and temptation of winning championships and tournament and prize money is leading some of the players to attempt and do what we don't want them to do, and what no honest opponent wants them to be able to do.

I believe it is reasonable for us to demand from players a standard of care which is not too complicated. When you head to an airport, you make sure you don't happen to carry by mistake any forbidden items. If you fail to do so you will carry the consequences (ask Brittney Griner).

Heading to a chess game is far easier than heading to the airport. You basically just need to bring yourself.

Is it too far fetched to demand a minimal standard of care from the players to help the FP team? If all players would be encouraged to bring nothing, it would be easier for us to concentrate in the FP violators.

Another argument is to send a message. If we don't, and the punishment is lenient, we risk players treating the cat and mouse game like a tiktok challenge - who is best in outsmarting the FP team and cheating.

My heart goes out to the expelled pleasant lady but rules have to be observed and all are equal under the law.

The general effect of the event on the tournament was positive. I sensed that players felt that there is law and order in control and they can play in confidence knowing there is FP control.

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Member of the ECU Arbiters Council



ECU Arbiters Council

The ECU Arbiters Council publishes monthly Arbiters' corner articles in the ECU EMagazine.

All the articles can be found on the ECU Arbiters Council website.

Contact:
ecuarbiterscouncil@gmail.com