

FINAL REPORT OF THE NAMT COMMITTEE

Subject: 2002 North American Masters Tournament (NAMT) Title Match Issues @
Chicago Congress, August , 2002

Present:

Yun Feng, Pro Nine Dan, Challenger
Xiaoren He, Pro Five Dan, Referee and Game Recorder
Roy Laird, AGA President
Chendao Lin, NAMT Chair and TD
Jeff Shaevel, NAMT ATD
Larry Gross, NAMT Scheduler
Mike Bull, NAMT Committee Member
Chuck Robbins, NAMT Committee Member
Jie Li, translator for Ms. Feng as requested by her

Following the Third Finals Match of the 2002 NAMT, Ms. Yun Feng (Pro Nine-Dan, Challenger) asked the NAMT committee to convene to hear issues she had with events that occurred during the Second and Third NAMT Finals games. This report summarizes the issues and our responses to them.

Ms. Feng reported that during the second game of the three Title Match games, she had some concerns with the Chronos Clock, with which she was not familiar. The following is a reconstruction of the events from Ms. Feng, Ms. He (Pro Five-Dan, Referee), and Mr. Zhujiu Jiang (Title Holder):

1. When overtime was entered, Ms Feng stated that she was confused by the arrangement of the numbers and asked the referee and game recorder, Ms. He, what the meaning of the numbers were. Mr. Jiang confirmed in an independent interview that this request was in fact made, and that the request was made during his thinking time.
2. Ms. Feng stated that she later noticed Mr. Jiang's time seemed to indicate only 16 seconds remaining, and the clock appeared not to be operating and again asked the referee for clarification. (The clock shows only minutes for anything over 10 minutes and shows minutes and seconds for anything less than 10 minutes. A set of dashes flashes to show time is passing. This accounts for the difference in appearance.) Mr. Jiang confirmed that this request was made, and again was made on his time.
3. A position was then reached where Ms. Feng had played all of the 20 stones placed in front of her for overtime while the clock indicated one more move left to play. She again asked the referee for clarification. Ms. He was busy with the game record and required a few moments to pause and handle the situation.
4. By the time item (3) was resolved, Ms. Feng stated that she had lost track of the Ko being played and asked Ms. He if it was her turn to take the Ko. Ms. He was not sure herself, as she was catching up with the record when the difficulty with the move count occurred. According to Ms. Feng, Mr. Jiang stated that the referee is not obligated to answer her question.

Ms. Feng later expressed displeasure at the manner in which Mr. Jiang's comment was expressed to her.

5. The Committee had consulted after the conclusion of the second game, with other Professionals and decided to clarify as well as simplify the overtime procedure by relying solely on the clock rather than a combined system of counting out stones and the clock. This was explained in detail to both players prior to the third game, with affirmation of understanding from both players.

6. Ms. Feng lost the third game on time, and then asked the committee that since the NAMT matches were being played using Ing rules, why didn't we use the ING time purchase system in overtime?

7. Ms. Feng charged that we changed the overtime method between the second and third game and expressed displeasure in that.

8. Ms. Feng complained that Mr. Jiang had no right to tell her not to talk to the referee, and in her opinion, this comment was inappropriate to the occasion. She also complained that Mr. Jiang was rude in that he had left the playing room without comment immediately after the conclusion of the Third Match.

NAMT Committee's Response:

While we understand the confusion that an unfamiliar clock may have caused [Items (1) and (2)]; it is the opinion of the committee that, as a generally accepted principle, it is the responsibility of the players to raise any questions or concerns regarding equipment, rules, or procedures prior to start of play. The ultimate understanding of these issues is the responsibility of the players. Some of the points raised by Ms. Feng will be clarified in the next version of the NAMT procedures document to avoid possible confusion in the future, but this does not excuse the players' obligation to raise and clarify any issues they consider important prior to the game. This position has been sustained by other Professionals who fully agree and support the Committee's statement.

Item (3) was resolved for the third game by no longer counting stones and using only the clock move count. This was explained to both players and implemented prior to the third game. Also at that time the players were given a detailed review of the Chronos clock and the timing procedures.

Every attempt was made to remedy the issues raised during the second game. [See item (5).] While we can appreciate the confusion that occurred in item (4), the player is solely responsible for following the flow of the game. The committee follows common practice in stating that the referee is free, but not obligated, to answer questions regarding the game (including Ko) However, the referee is not RESPONSIBLE for the answer. That is, the player is solely responsible for the move and any consequences that may befall an illegal play.

Regarding item (6), the Committee pointed out that detailed rules and regulations for NAMT had

been sent to each player prior to the Tournament. It was the responsibility of the players to read through the documents, understand the procedures, and agree to play by them. Ignorance of the rules is no excuse. (The ONLY exception to this is an illegal play under Ing Ko. The Ing rules explicitly specify that if a player makes an illegal capture due to unfamiliarity with the Ing Ko rules, no penalty will be applied.) The Committee pointed out to Ms. Feng that this is her second year of participation and she had played more than 10 tournament games using the same set of rules. Before each game, the overtime in terms of X moves in Y minutes had been repeated and no mention of penalty points had ever been made. This was deemed by the committee to be sufficient notification of the method of overtime management, as the rules state that EITHER seconds counting OR penalty points will be used.

Regarding item (7), the committee responded to Ms. Feng's complaint of the second game (item 3) by eliminating a potential confusing step. Both players were given an explanation of the modification prior to the third game with firm confirmation of understanding from both players in front of NAMT officials and the referee. No question or objection was registered at that time. The Committee did not change the overtime rule, but modified the procedure, taking Ms. Feng's complaints concerning the second game into consideration in order to avoid further complications. The rule, as stated in our manual is clear: 20 moves in 20 minutes.

With respect to point (8), the Committee agrees that it is not appropriate for the opposing player to respond to questions for the referee. It is noted that Ms. Feng had repeated questions for the referee during her opponent's think time which was not appropriate. Lastly, pertaining to her specific complaint that Mr. Jiang left the room without comment immediately after the conclusion of the Third Match; it was the recollection of Ms. He and Jeff Shaevel (NAMT ATD), who were present at that time, that it was, in fact, Ms. Feng who left immediately afterwards without comment while Mr. Jiang remained for analysis with others.

The conclusions of the committee are that Ms. Feng's complaints are not sufficient to warrant revision of the results previously reported. However some clarification of the rules is in order for next year to help clarify procedures regarding the clock and player/referee interaction. It will, however, remain the responsibility of all participating players to be familiar with the rules and procedures and to raise any questions regarding them prior to play.

Sincerely,

The NAMT Committee
Chendao Lin, Chair
Jeff Shaevel
Don Wiener [not present]
Larry Gross
Mike Bull
Chuck Robbins