

# Why is this Rating Supplement so Big?

## Notes on the new USCF Ratings System Programming

On February 14, 2005, the USCF finally entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the launching of the first comprehensive rewrite of the ratings system programming in nearly 15 years. This is part of a complete redesign of the USCF's internal computer systems that began in 2003 and should be completed later this year.

Here's a description of what the new ratings programming does for the USCF and its membership.

First, it is important to note that the ratings formulas themselves were not changed, the new programming computes ratings using the same mathematical formulas that have been in effect since 2000.

What has changed is the hardware and software we run it on, going from an obsolete combination of COBOL programming for membership records (a holdover from the USCF's first computer system in the 1970s) and Clipper for the ratings system. Instead of five-year-old PCs running Windows, we have a state of the art multi-processor system running Linux. Instead of COBOL and dBase files, we use a relational database management system. Instead of a labor-intensive process, we have a system that speeds up the rating process from start to end and does a far more comprehensive and consistent job of checking events for errors.

What has also changed is the way we accept tournament results. We still accept reports on paper or on diskette, but we also accept them via the Internet, which cuts the amount of time it takes to rate an event and improves the accuracy of the reported results, because the Tournament Director (TD) is now an active partner in the error-checking process.

In fact, it is now possible for a TD to run an event, submit the results via the Internet, correct any errors, and still have the event rated within 60 minutes of when the last game ended, with the results up on the USCF website soon afterwards.

However, that much of a decrease in the time it can take to rate an event doesn't come without a few problems.

For years we have had events that were received and rated out of order, sometimes by many months. (For example, in December 2004 we rated one event from December 2003, one from January 2004, and three from May 2004.)

With the ability to submit events online within hours of the last pawn being pushed, the number of events received and rated out of order could skyrocket.

Another issue we have struggled with over the years is making corrections to events. Our old ratings system did not make it easy to correct events, and as a result many times they just didn't get done, or weren't done promptly.

However, if an event is changed, then it has to be rerated; otherwise why bother correcting it? And if we rerate that event, what about all the players whose ratings have now changed in that event? Shouldn't their other events be rerated too?

As long as we're rerating those events, why not put them into the right order based on the event ending date as well? That corrects both problems.

And that's what we've done! We will now rerate events periodically to put them into the order they should have been in the first place!

But, that means that occasionally your post-event rating from an event will change, even though you haven't played lately.

*Hey, wait a minute, you changed my rating???*

Well, yes and no. We **corrected** your rating by putting your events into the right order based on when they were held, the order in which they should have been rated all along.

To get the new system started properly, we felt it was necessary to rerate all events held or rated in 2004. That allowed us to correct a number of errors in those events, including some problems that were caused by the new membership programming. We also had an unusually large number of events in 2004 that were either rated twice or rated under the wrong ratings system (regular instead of quick or vice versa). Rerating all of the events in 2004 allowed us the opportunity to review our records to find as many of the duplicated events as possible and to delete those events or correct them to the right ratings system.

Because of this large-scale rerate, around 30,000 ratings have changed from their most recently published value, most by just a few points.

For active players this has little significance as their ratings tend to fluctuate up and down all the time, and it still does after a rerate. For rapidly improving players, putting their events into ending-date order generally increases the rate at which their rating adjusts to reflect their true strength.

There you have it. For the foreseeable future, you'll need to develop your arm muscles as the supplements will be half again as large as they were. Better yet, enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century and update your player records from our website:  
[www.uschess.org](http://www.uschess.org)

Remember, if you don't need the hard copy of the rating supplement, and you want to help your USCF save money on printing and postage. Please contact: Walter Brown, Technical Specialist, [wbrown@uschess.org](mailto:wbrown@uschess.org), 931-787-1234 Ext. 142.