

Yomiuri Shimbun, December 26, 2016

Report of the Third-party Committee

"No Evidence of Improper Conduct by Miura, but Suspension was Appropriate"

Regarding the suspension imposed on 9th dan-ranked Hiroyuki Miura by the Japan Shogi Association (JSA), a third-party committee chaired by former public prosecutor Keiichi Tadaki submitted its report to the JSA on December 26. The committee found that there was insufficient evidence that Hiroyuki Miura had engaged in improper conduct but that the ban imposed on him by the JSA had been "unavoidable."

According to the report summary, in view of suspicions that Miura had made improper use of shogi software in four games played from July to October this year and Miura's failure to submit a written notification to take a break from playing official shogi games in spite of announcing his intention to do so, Miura was suspended from playing for the rest of the year on October 12. Since Miura denied the allegations, on October 27 the JSA commissioned a third-party committee to determine whether he had engaged in improper conduct and whether the action taken by the JSA had been appropriate.

The suspicions that Miura had made use of shogi software had been based on the allegations that he had left the room an unusual number of times during the games in question and that there was a very high correspondence between the moves he played and those of shogi software. As a result of an analysis based on interviews with players and videos of the games, the committee found that, regarding Miura's leaving the room, "it could not find any evidence that might arouse suspicion of wrongdoing" and, regarding the correspondence with shogi software, that "similar levels of correspondence could be found in other games by Miura and in moves by other players."

The results of the committee's analysis of the smartphone and personal

computer handed over by Miura also failed to show any evidence of improper conduct, and the committee concluded that "the matters put forward as grounds for suspicion have very little value as substantial evidence."

However, the committee recognized that, at the time Miura was suspended from playing, the "suspicions that he had used software were strong" and that "if he had been allowed to play in the Ryuo title match under those circumstances, this would inevitably have led to chaos" and "it is easy to imagine that this would have damaged the credibility and authority of the JSA and the shogi world." Accordingly, the committee concluded that the action taken by the JSA had been appropriate. The Ryuo title match was held with Tadahisa Maruyama standing in as the challenger in place of Miura.

At the press conference, the committee chairman Keiichi Tadaki was asked whether Miura's innocence was now "as close to certain as can be". He replied, "that is for you to judge ... we found no evidence to suggest any improper conduct." Regarding the financial damage that Miura has suffered as a result of his suspension, Tadaki stated that he hoped for "balanced discussions between the JSA and Miura 9-dan." The committee's report expressed the hope that an environment where Miura can display his ability to the fullest would be provided and that the shogi world would return to normal as soon as possible.