

Sankei News, December 27, 2016

JSA Press Conference

“Planned publication of weekly magazine article forced the decision to suspend Miura “

In response to the conclusion announced on December 27 by a third-party committee that there were "no grounds for suspicion" regarding improper use of computer software by Hiroyuki Miura, the Japan Shogi Association (JSA) held a press conference.

Statement by JSA Chairman Koji Tanigawa

The committee's report concluded (1) Miura was not guilty of any wrongdoing and (2) The suspension of Miura was appropriate. Although the decision of the JSA's managing directors' meeting was deemed appropriate, I would like to apologize to Miura 9-dan for causing him mental suffering.

We need to reflect on the fact that, at a time when shogi software is becoming much stronger, we have been slow to implement regulations regarding taking electronic devices into the playing room. The JSA also failed to confirm the truth of statements made about Miura 9-dan at the regular players' meeting held in July, where suspicions were first expressed. I feel responsible for this.

Regarding the correspondence between the moves of Miura 9-dan and those of shogi software, it has been found that there were variations of around 20 percent. The JSA should have obtained correct information regarding this.

However, we also had to deal with fact that it had become certain that a weekly magazine was going to publish an article about the suspicions of improper conduct. We expected that such an article would make it necessary to cancel the Ryuo title match and, with little time left and no other realistic options, the suspension was unavoidable.

Miura 9-dan will return to playing in January. The JSA will do everything possible to ensure that he can focus completely on playing shogi.

As a result of the suspension, Miura lost his 5th and 6th games in Division A of the Junisen League by default. The JSA has decided to take the special measure of guaranteeing Miura's place in Division A. Next season, Miura will play in Division A in 11th position.

Finally, we would like once again to apologize deeply to all our sponsors and to Miura 9-dan and his family for the inconvenience caused."

Q & A Session

Q: Will any financial compensation be provided to Miura?

Tanigawa: The Ryuo title match has been completed, but Miura 9-dan has suffered damage. Therefore we will take the measure of guaranteeing his place in Division A of the Junisen League.

Q: When will this be conveyed to Miura 9-dan?

Tanigawa: I'm sorry, but I have not confirmed this with the executive office... Yes, it seems that this Miura 9-dan has already been told about this. He was informed today.

We take it very seriously that Miura 9-dan has been deprived of the opportunity to play official shogi games for two and a half months. However, we thought we should first and foremost strive to ensure that the Ryuo title match was safely held.

Q: Miura has stated that he would like the Ryuo title match to be replayed. What do you think about this?

Akira Shima (JSA Managing Director): "The Ryuo title match has ended after a magnificent battle. This year's match has been completed. Miura 9-dan will be able to complete next season in the same group as this season.

We are painfully aware that the JSA failed to confirm the fact that Miura had not been away from the playing room for 30 minutes, which was

one basis for the suspicions of improper conduct. However, we are not considering taking action against the players who made these allegations at players regular meetings or on other occasions.

I personally feel heavy responsibility.

Teruichi Aono (JSA Executive Director): It was pointed out that Miura had been away from the playing room for as long as 30 minutes, but in fact he was away from the board for six, three, and three minutes. The players who made these allegations must have been under a misapprehension.

It was only three days before the scheduled start of the Ryuo title match that we learned an article about a "suspicious challenger" was going to appear in a weekly magazine. Above all, the JSA wanted to avoid having to cancel the Ryuo title match. That is why we decide to replace the challenger.

I should also point out that the JSA never forced Miura 9-dan to withdraw from playing in the Ryuo title match.

Q: What is the responsibility of the JSA executive?

Tanigawa: According to the report, the decision made by the JSA was appropriate. The JSA's external directors have also responded that there is no need for the executive to take responsibility. However, the managing directors' meeting is responsible for failing to take strict measures regarding the handling of electronic devices. However, we should not give up our jobs because of this. The JSA executive should work hard from now on to fulfill all its duties.

Nevertheless, since we feel that some penalty ought to be imposed on us, Mr. Shima, Mr. Aono and myself will have our salaries reduced by 30 percent for the next three months.

Q: How did you reach the conclusion that Miura had not in fact been away from the board for 30 minutes?

Shima: The Go & Shogi TV Channel had a video of the games. We checked this in mid-December and realized the allegations had been wrong. The JSA itself had no video data, so we were too late to confirm this fact.

Q: You say you will make every effort to ensure that Miura can focus on shogi. How will you help him with the mental damage he has incurred?

Tanigawa: We cannot comment on this at present. We promise to make every effort to ensure that Miura 9-dan's reputation is fully restored.