

MICHAEL CAVALLO IS THE NEW USCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by Sam Sloan

Michael Cavallo of Cambridge Mass, a former scholastic player, is the new Executive Director of the United States Chess Federation. His first day on the job was Wednesday, January 15.

Cavallo comes to the job with impressive qualifications. He has a Harvard MBA. He has considerable business experience, including involvement in two multi-million dollar non-profit corporations. He was appointed to a three man commission by Governor William Weld of Massachusetts. His list of qualifications is so long that they will not be recounted here. He is the first professional manager in the history of the USCF.

Cavallo is a rated chess expert, with a rating of 2142*^{x7} on the December, 1996 Annual USCF Rating list.

The only real question about Cavallo is whether he will be able to devote his full time which this job obviously requires, in view of his multitude of other business involvements.

Cavallo faces a terrible mess at the USCF headquarters in New Windsor NY. There is doubt whether anybody would be capable of success at the job which has been set out for him. However, this has advantages as well. If Cavallo fails, it will always be said that he faced impossible and intractable problems.

Among the many problems facing Cavallo will be the top order of business, which is to phase out Acting Executive Director George Filippone. Apparently, even the staunchest supporters of Filippone have finally realized that George has to go. Filippone is entitled to significant severance pay pursuant to a contract he signed with Al Lawrence just prior to Lawrence's departure. However, Filippone is demanding substantially more than his contract calls for, and is threatening to sue if he does not get the money he is demanding. One of the grounds cited by Filippone for his proposed suit is that he has been "harassed" out of his job by Internet postings attacking him.

It is difficult to understand how a person like Filippone who has worked for the USCF only about two years and whose current position has always been labeled as "temporary" would have grounds for a suit. However, the threat of high legal costs plus the possibility of even sabotage by a person in Filippone's position always makes a task such as that faced by Cavallo of how to get rid of him a tricky one.

The underlying problems which Cavallo faces are the shrinking revenues, the declining memberships and the half million dollar loss which the USCF has suffered over the past six months. Further problems include office disorganization and widespread customer and membership dissatisfaction with almost everything about the USCF. The patented USCF chess clock which has never worked properly is a problem which will probably have to remain on the back burner for a while.

Finally, there is perhaps the biggest problem at all, which is the incredible amount of fighting which has broken out among the policy board members during the past two months. However, this fighting has been directly related to the mismanagement within the USCF office and to conflicting visions of what to do about it. If Cavallo is able to solve the internal working problems within the USCF office, presumably this fighting among members of the governing body will stop.

The USCF has 85,000 members plus a revenue base of \$6.6 million annually and is ultimately backed

by a million dollar trust fund. Predictions of the imminent demise of the USCF are decidedly premature.

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