

## New Rules for USCF Rated Matches

A match is inherently different than other types of chess events, because it is an arranged contest between two players, generally involving multiple games. This affects the statistical assumptions upon which the USCF rating system is based, namely that ratings are based upon a large number of games against a diverse group of opponents. There are also numerous opportunities for manipulation of ratings via matches.

As a result, the USCF treats matches differently than other ways to pair players, such as the Swiss System, Round Robin, randomly paired or ladder events, both in terms of who may play in a match and what ratings changes may result from that match.

For USCF purposes, a match is defined as any event in which all or substantially all of the games are between two individuals who choose to play each other or are chosen to play each other multiple times, such as a multi-game team-on-team match.

That definition would exclude any games from events that arise as a result of specific pairing situations during a tournament, such as extra games involving a house player, poor turnout in a section, etc. Since the players didn't enter the event with the intention of playing one person multiple times, the rules regarding participation in a match should not apply. The limitations on ratings changes from match play given below may still apply.

Playoffs to decide place prizes in a tournament may be treated as matches.

In validating events, sections in which all the players have just one opponent and at least one of those pairs of players play each other more than once will be considered matches. An event which would otherwise be considered a match between two players but with an extra round in which one or both of the players in the match play another person will also be considered a match.

Matches can be as short as one game or as long as 32 games. They can be rated under the regular USCF rating system, quick rated, or rated under both systems, depending upon the time control.

Both players in a match must have established and published ratings, and those ratings must be no more than 400 points apart as of the most recent published ratings for those players when the match is held.

Under the USCF ratings system, matches are not eligible for bonus points.

A player may gain or lose no more than 50 rating points in a match.

Also, a player may only have a cumulative gain or cumulative loss of up to 100 rating points through match play during any 180 day period, and may only have a cumulative gain or cumulative loss of up to 200 rating points through match play during any three year period.

Matches must be coded properly when they are submitted to the USCF for rating, either by noting it as a match on the rating report form and crosstable when sending the rating report to the USCF via the mail, or by coding the event as a match when submitting the event online using the USCF's TD/Affiliate Support Area.

If a certified TD is not submitting the match results, both players must sign a notarized statement that the match conformed to USCF match rules and other conditions for USCF rated play.

During validation of an event, any section involving just two players that is two or more games long will be considered an error if it is not coded as a match, as will other sections that appear to be a match .

TDs are asked to identify as matches any one-game sections they submit that were intended as matches between those two players (i.e., the two players chose to play each other.)

In the event that some sections in a tournament appear to be matches based on the above definition but are not, the TD will have to contact the USCF to explain the circumstances before the USCF will rate the event. The USCF office will decide if the circumstances warrant an exception to the rules regarding the ratings of the players separately from whether the restrictions on ratings changes should apply to that event.

The USCF may, at its discretion, apply the match rules to any section in which two players face each other more than twice, either before rating the event or after it has been rated. TDs may be asked to identify any such sections in advance and explain why they should not be treated as matches. The USCF may also choose to combine multiple sections or multiple events and treat them as a match.

Match results may not count towards qualification for invitational events. Matches are not eligible for Grand Prix or Junior Grand Prix points.

Finally, any player whose plays in a match and who is either at his or her floor or reaches his or her floor as a result of that match will be considered to have submitted a request to have that floor lowered by 100 points. The USCF ratings department will review the player's tournament history to decide if the floor should be lowered.

Events which in the USCF's judgement are intended to flaunt or circumvent these match rules may be classified as a match, and may also result in sanctions against the submitting TD, the sponsoring affiliate or the players involved.

Approved by the USCF Executive Board on Feb 18, 2012.