THE 4TH COMPUTERS AND GAMES CONFERENCE

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The 4th Computers and Games conference was held in Ramat-Gan, Israel on July 5 to 7, 2004. After two conferences in Japan and one in Canada, it was the first time that Israel hosts this major event which was organised by the ICGA and the Institute for Knowledge and Agent Technology (IKAT). The conference was organised in conjunction with two other events: the 12th World Computer Chess Championship, and the 9th Computer Olympiad. The conference was held for three days, and the lectures were planned in the morning, enabling the computer tournaments to be played in the afternoon and early evening. The three events took place at Bar-Ilan university, thus everyone was able to attend the conference and the tournaments. The 29 participants came from all over the world: Europe, Canada, USA, Israel, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The programme consisted in 21 lectures and one invited lecture. The programme chairs, Nathan Netanyahu, Yngvi Björnsson, and Jaap van den Herik, invited Brian Sheppard, author of the Scrabble program Maven. His lecture was titled Efficient Control of Selective Simulations. Selective simulation is a search technique that estimates the value of a move in a state space by averaging the results of a selected sample of continuations. The value of selective sampling has been demonstrated in domains such as Backgammon, Poker, Bridge, Scrabble, and even Go. Besides, Brian Sheppard received the ChessBase Award for the best publication in the ICGA Journal in 2002. The other contributions dealt with many games: Go, Chess or variants of Chess, Amazons, Backgammon, Poker, Supply chain game, Dao, Arimaa, Kayles, and with various techniques such as *-minimax, history heuristic, multi-player game search, opening book, opponent modelling, retrograde analysis, Monte Carlo, transpositions and combinatorial game theory. The contributions had a high quality, and the talks generated very interesting discussions. The organisation was excellent enabling the participants to listen to the talks while following the tournaments' games in a very nice way. As in the previous conferences, the participants took great benefits from exchanging their ideas about games and computers. I am sure they warmly thank all the organisation for this successful conference. The proceedings of the conference will be published by Springer-Verlag in the Lecture Notes in Computer Science series. More information can be found on the conference website at http://www.ru.is/cg2004/.

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