

COMMON TOURNAMENT FAILINGS

I. GENERAL TOURNAMENT PREPARATION

A. Rest:

1. Don't drive (or ride and stay awake) for more than 4 hours and play two games on the same day.
2. At least once a day, make sure that your legs are higher than your head for 20-30 minutes.

Don't play speed chess between rounds for the following reasons:

4. You will get in the habit of moving too fast, a habit which often carries over into your next round's slow time control game and
5. Your emotional appetite for a "quick win / quick resolution" of a chess game often gets highly stimulated. This excited, emotional state of mind will often make the slow time control game of your next round seem slow and boring by comparison.

B. Diet:

1. Avoid heavy meals-eat light.
3. Avoid perfunctory (automatic) coffee or caffeine.
4. Avoid fluids during the last 1/2 hour of play.
6. Avoid alcohol until after the final round of the day.
7. Avoid sugar snacks.
8. Do take vitamins, particularly Multi-Vitamins and the "B" Complex.
9. Do chew sugarless gum.

C. Thinking Time Allocation:

1. Stay at the board as long as possible, but do stretch and walk around on your opponent's time.

When at the board:

2. Do tactics on your own time, but
3. Do strategy on your opponent's time. You should do "if-then" calculation when it is your opponent's turn to move only if you are in great time-pressure. In such a case, try to predict your opponent's most likely forcing moves.
4. It is very important to practice #2 & #3 above, because tactical calculation must be more precise than general strategical assessment, and is usually more fatiguing.

II. TIME PRESSURE

A. Bad effects of time-pressure on your game:

1. The passive over-estimation of your opponent's threats. (Seeing "ghosts").
2. The under-estimation of your own threats.
3. The avoidance of making "long" moves, especially on the diagonals.
6. The passive clustering of your own pieces into a "ball".
7. "Set Pattern" or "Fixed Plan" thinking.
8. The tendency towards "automatic" simplification.

B. Bad effects of time-pressure on you physically:

1. Great anxiety at the time.

3. Excessive bladder stimulation, at a time when you can least afford extra trips to the bathroom.
4. Becoming badly overheated and dehydrated due to the increased metabolic rate involved.
6. Extra physical strain and nervous exhaustion in general, which can easily affect your future rounds.

C. *Bad effects of time-pressure in the tournament room:*

1. Tends to attract the distraction of noisy spectators.
3. The chessmen get accidentally placed "off-square" in a time-scramble, making it more difficult to get a clear picture of the board.
5. A general increase in the stress levels of the two players, which can easily result in loud and upsetting arguments.
6. Increased scorekeeping errors, with damage done to you in any rules disputes that might arise.

D. *How to exploit your opponent's severe time-pressure:*

(Note: The following plan works only if your OPPONENT is in time-pressure but YOU are NOT in time – pressure.)

6. If steps 1-5 listed above are not possible, then simply ignore the opponent's time-pressure and, above all, stay calm. Remember-if your opponent is only in mild time-pressure, this is often not exploitable.
7. If it is possible to make a high-quality move while the opponent is away from the board, this will normally have a greater effect if he is in great time-pressure.

E. *How to avoid time-pressure:*

1. Have a well-developed and thoroughly memorized opening repertoire, and specialize in it.
3. Don't spend large amounts of time away from the board.
4. Allocate your thinking time between the 3 stages of the game.
6. Don't worry much about the future result of your game.
7. Don't worry about previous missed opportunities.
9. Don't "triple-check" variations.

III. GENERAL

A. *Study habits:*

1. You should spend at least 4 hours studying for every 1 hour that you spend playing in tournaments.

B. *Sources:*

1. Psychology in Chess - Krogus.
2. Think Like a Grandmaster - Kotov.
3. Over 40 years of experience as a player, master and chess instructor.