

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHESS ASSOCIATION AGM 2024

OFFICERS' REPORTS

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**President's Report** (Maurice Hill)

*[See main text of minutes]*

**General Secretary** (Nick London)

NCA functioned without a general secretary in post for several months, and EC members attempted to discharge relevant duties among themselves. I felt it would be better if a single individual filled the role, so I volunteered to act as interim Gen. Sec. until the AGM; EC co-opted me into this post. The main duties have been writing up minutes, arranging for general meetings and dealing with a small amount of correspondence and enquiries. I am willing to stand for this position for 2024-25 if required.

**Treasurer** (Steve Burke)

*[See Appendix 2]*

**League Secretary** (Mike Naylor-Eade)

Congratulations to the league champions, Mansfield, and to the other division winners:

- Nomads 1
- West Bridgford 2
- University 2, and
- Ashfield 4

League rules were returned to normal for the first season since Covid-19. This led to a couple of mishaps with players being fielded in the wrong order, but captains were mainly on top of the requirements.

The LMC were called on to make a number of decisions which should be on the NCA website by the time of this AGM. I was wholly dissatisfied with one of these requests, which the LMC chose to handle without my involvement. The request was not made by a club representative and was voted on in a rush with little discussion. When I raised these concerns after the event I received little response and was disappointed for a second time. For these reasons, among others, I will not be standing as League Secretary next season. My thanks to the sole LMC member who responded to my concerns, and to those captains that I had to deal with over disputes who were courteous and helpful.

**Records Secretary** (Simon Scott)

The season has overall run smoothly, with most captains uploading results promptly without issues. Only occasionally did I need to remind captains to provide match scores. Given that we reinstated most league rules, there were very few breaches which led to penalties.

There has been some confusion over the use of P-ratings, which the league treats as unrated. An improvement to the LMS admin means P-ratings can be identified more easily so this should be less of a problem next season.

1075 league games were submitted for rating (including 46 Minor League rapid games). Gambit also made use of the LMS to run their Rapidplay, this facility is open to all clubs to take advantage of.

**League Management Committee** (Chair: Chris Holt)

Thank you to everyone who has participated in the LMC this year. This can be quite a vital role and needs participation from as many clubs as possible to be effective and seen to be fair and impartial. We have moved meetings more online since the pandemic, which hopefully speeds up the decision-making process when we do have issues to discuss and resolve. Mike has helpfully put a list of decisions on the website. As ever, a wide range of issues, large and small, to keep the league running effectively.

One issue we were not asked to consider but generated some debate, was that of defaults affecting promotions or relegations and if we had the powers and prerogative to intervene without a complaint. As a result, at the RRM, we asked for that the words in the standing orders of the committee be re-inserted into the rules to make this clear:

*"h. Rule D2 "Team penalties – a). The penalty for defaulting a match or infringing B3, B4 or B15(a) is the loss of 2 match points and a fine of £20. b) The penalty for infringing B14 is the match is recorded as a double default. i. c) The LMC may take other such action as it deems equitable as set out in the standing orders of LMC" Proposal accepted, none against"*

Also, that the defaulting team should provide some explanation as to circumstances:

*Rule B8 "A match will be defaulted by any team that fails to field at least half the number of players scheduled to play in a match. A team which defaults a match is required to submit a written explanation to the League (or Records) Secretary." For: 13, Against 7 Proposal accepted.*

### **Minor League Coordinator** (Nick London)

Only three teams competed this season – one less than 22-23 – so there were only 6 fixtures in total.

The competition was won by West Bridgford Winterhawks, with West Nottingham New Brooms 2<sup>nd</sup> and Radcliffe Rockets 3<sup>rd</sup>. The policy of a 3-board minimum with extra players by mutual agreement worked well, with most matches played over 4 boards. Several players new to league match chess gained valuable experience.

All three teams consisted entirely of juniors, but this league is not purely intended for them; any club with new players who would like a 'gentle' and informal introduction to match play competition could form a team, including a group not currently formally a member of NCA.

Those clubs taking part this year have expressed interest in continuing this event.

### **Correspondence Team Captain** (Phil Morgan)

In 2023-24 we played in Division 1 of the British Counties and Districts Correspondence Event. 8 players played 16 games. As engine assistance is permitted, most games are drawn. Wins are very hard to come by. We had 13 draws, 2 losses and 1 win by Richard Webster. We finished 6th of 8 teams and retained our place in Division 1. The 2024-25 event has just commenced.

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### **Tournaments Committee** (Steve Burke, Simon Scott and John Swain)

We welcomed a record number of players to our Rapidplay and Congress this year (176 and 172 respectively) having decided to expand the maximum number of competitors from 160 to 180. Last-minute withdrawals or no-shows explain the slight shortfall. An extra fifteen LEAP clocks were purchased to facilitate the extra numbers and to compensate for some problems with existing DGT 2010s, several of which are starting to malfunction. We are very grateful to Ed Jones and Nottinghamshire Primary Schools Chess Association for their loan of kit already sited at Nottingham High School, which means that we do not need to transport NCA boards and sets from Bramcote, and to West Nottingham Chess Club for the use of their clocks when necessary. With the departure of David Coates as webmaster, we are also very grateful to Stephen Humphreys, who took over the IT admin of the sites including their smooth transfer to our new domain.

The record numbers meant that we were able to offer extra prizes at both events (slow-starter prizes for those not scoring more than 1/3 in the early rounds) which are always popular and help to discourage early withdrawals. Bumper numbers also meant that we did not need to activate the loss guarantee kindly provided by the Nottinghamshire Chess Foundation which was requested for the Congress. Prize-winners and results for both events may be viewed on chess-results.com (details on the NCA website).

In both events, profits from tea and coffee sales were donated to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal (£250 and £352.50 respectively). Thanks are due to all who helped staff this facility.

Thanks are due to all who helped to organise the events, including players who assisted with some of the setting up and packing away, which is always appreciated. Our regular team of arbiters ensured the tournaments proceeded without a hitch: Hambel Willow, John Swain, Marcel Taylor, Phill Beckett, Stephen Humphreys and Simon Scott. Particular thanks are due to Marcel Taylor who is finally bowing out of sponsoring these events which began with the Congress in 2017 and later extended to the Rapidplay; the creation and sponsorship of the prizes for the Improvers Section at both events was due to Marcel's initiative. The participants and organisers at the Congress gave Marcel a very well-deserved round of applause for his generosity and input.

### **County Championship** (Mike Naylor-Eade)

As there was danger of the season passing without a county championship, Gambit volunteered to organise the competition. With thanks to Nick London for suggesting a suitable venue, the date was eventually set for June 15th and 16th. We received 24 entrants, which was a little on the low side, but understandable given the short notice and the clash with Fathers' Day. (A foolish scheduling error given the general demographics of the chess playing community.) Apart from some variable weather leading to a sodden giant chess set the event went ahead smoothly.

The Championship was won by Michael Barnes, for a record extending eighth time.

The Junior title was won by Eldars Gulijevs, who was unable to beat Michael in the final round to go one better and claim the Silver Rook.

U1850 Champion was Marcel Taylor with 2.5/5 in the open

U1600 Champion was Sebastian Cross with 4/5 in that section

Congratulations to all our champions, and other prize winners. For full results see the League Management System.

We hope that another club will be willing to step forward and organise a 2024/25 event.

### **ECF Delegate** (Chris Holt)

As usual, I attended both the AGM and finance meetings via Zoom. While most delegates seem finally to be getting the hang of using video conferencing, this year's finance meeting was enlivened by one delegate sorting his clothes washing and then disrobing (fortunately caught by the admin before he revealed his shortcomings to the rest of us).

There is the continuing problem with the council being able to hold the executive and officers to account. I think that the processes work fine, but the quality of information, transparency and challenge could all be improved. I appreciate that delegates are volunteers, but the levels of debate and scrutiny can be much less than a club or county AGM.

Having said that, the process of changing the membership levels, and associated fees, was handled poorly. Lots of people were and are unhappy with what happened, the Notts exec wrote to the ECF around several issues. At the AGM delegates appeared to be confused by what they were voting for at each stage. At the finance meeting the issue of raising rates was bound up with the DCMS grant being negotiated by Malcolm Pein and Dominic Lawson when it seemed we were getting somewhere with not amalgamating some of the bands and raising rates on top. In the end, when it came to a vote, only myself, Tim Walker and John Reyes from the MCCU voted to keep the combined silver/gold membership fees uninflated.

I am willing to stand for another year as I combine the same role with Lincolnshire as part of my job as General Secretary.

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#### **MCCU Delegates** (Tim Walker, Chris Budd)

Chris and I attended the MCCU annual meeting in June.

In March this year, we organised the re-ignition of the Midlands Under-18's team jamboree, held in Nottingham. Teams of twelve played over the last Sunday in March, with representation from Leicestershire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and new Derbyshire team, as well as the Nottinghamshire team we ran.

Nottinghamshire were near to full strength, comprising of ten boys and two girls, and managed to win the jamboree with 20 points, narrowly ahead of Leicestershire. It's planned to hold a similar or even more expanded jamboree again next season (probably with another county hosting).

Significant thanks to the Nottinghamshire CA Junior committee, Simon, Hambel Willow, Nick London and Stephen Humphreys who all helped out on the day of the jamboree also. Thanks also to the NCF, and all the NCF trustees, for generously underwriting the venue for the morning and afternoon of the successful event.

At the Mccu meeting, there is new counties controller (Steve smithson took over from Peter Sherlock last month) and new format to encourage Notts and other counties to enter more teams. So a hopeful action on us. For what is worth, Chris and I concur that the new formats from the meeting would make it easier for us to enter teams: hopefully may encourage captains to come forward or re-enter themselves.

Three Mccu counties had no representation at the meeting, though their views were sought on counties comp by chair and webmaster before the meeting and fed in from those who sent views.

As a declaration, when it came up impromptu at a proposal in the meeting, I (Tim) voted for the lower time limit option (still the longest limit we play imho), rather than 135 minutes plus 10s (up to five/six hour session) being compulsory. I am happy to vote to revert this again to long limit of course, if Notts would like, at next meeting.

At the MCCU AGM, the delegates present agreed various points to try to facilitate more counties competing in the MCCU counties competition.

Next season easier format as follows:-

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1. In the Midlands stage, the default number of boards will be 12 for this season (not 16).
  2. There is not planned to be any Midlands competition run for the Open Section next season as it stands.
  3. Default time controls for the Minor Section are 135 minutes plus 15 second increments.
  4. Default time controls for lower Sections are 100 or 110 minutes plus 10 second increments (within the Midlands).
  5. Captains can agree different time controls with the agreement of the Controller (Director of County Chess) - Stephen Smithson - and we desire to facilitate things working well as much as we can.
  6. All counties are urged to prioritise competitions in the Minor and U1650 sections.
  7. In the Midlands stage, there are no rating limits for the Minor section - S Smithson, P Sharrett
  8. It is noted that County captains may wish to negotiate some of the boards in U1650 to be restricted to U1450 players for matches between them.
  9. All MCCU counties are welcome in addition to submit entries for any other sections, but asked to use best endeavours to get teams for the above two as top priority
  10. Our aim is to run at least two competitions with at least 5 or 6 counties competing in each either this season or in the near future.
  11. Entries should be sent to the Midlands Controller by 31<sup>st</sup> August. Late entries can be considered where necessary.
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#### **Junior Committee** (Tim Walker)

The multiple activities of the last two years have been basically sustained and one or two things added. Most Notts juniors have played in one or more of the below.

Junior online 4 Nations chess league entered and played in over the season (multiple instances);

Lichess monthly inter-county blitz arena - our team has been promoted to, and competed in, Division One multiple times;

English Junior coaches National Youth final again in Nottingham this month- sections from under-8 to under-20: Nottinghamshire juniors participated and attended Master trainings on the Saturday and Sunday;

We re-started - and hosted - the Midlands Juniors Teams jamboree for the first time properly since Covid. This took place in March. Our Under-18 team, which consisted of ten boys and two girls, aged 11-17, managed to win the event from Leicestershire who were second.

Finally to say, several of these initiatives and events are underwritten and supported financially by the NCF so big thanks to them.

**Nottinghamshire Chess Foundation** (chair of trustees: Nick London)

NCF has just reached the end of its third full financial year and has a well-established regular routine and procedure of considering and making grants to various applicants.

The difficult financial environment in recent years has meant that the legacy from Robert Richmond on which the Foundation is based has suffered some decline in capital resources, but these have recently recovered to original values. In general, income from investments has exceeded expenditure in the form of grants.

During the last 12 months the NCF has supported and funded 13 different projects/events and distributed £7383. These have included:

- Helping individual promising Notts juniors with the costs of competing at national/international levels
- Funds for regional/national Junior events taking place within the County
- Underwriting losses for NCA events
- Support for adult teams competing nationally
- Support for local schools wishing to enhance their chess equipment

None of these projects were a major commitment given the resources available. The trustees are willing to support major strategic projects that take chess development well beyond the current pattern provided they meet the charity's criteria. All reasonable and thought-through proposals will be given serious consideration, but as the main organising body for chess in the county, NCA collectively needs to take action on this.

NCA has the status of an 'appointing body' for the Foundation and can nominate up to three people to act as trustees for a period of three years. From 2021-2024 these trustees were Chris Budd, Dave Griffiths and Graham Neil. Their term of office has now completed and NCA now needs to nominate three trustees to act in the same capacity. NCA can nominate the same or different people, but it should be noted that Graham Neil has given notice that he is not able to continue in this capacity.

The independent trustees would like to offer thanks to the NCA nominees for their service and informed input in the business of the Foundation for the past three years.

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