

## **County Championship Changes - Consultation on Proposals**

### **Introduction**

There are various proposals set out below, based on the results of the survey carried out in Autumn 2017. There were over 180 replies to the various questionnaires, the vast majority of which were from players. It was very noticeable that some counties and captains did a great job in getting their players in responding to the questionnaire, and they should be congratulated for their effort.

There are various proposals set out below, which are being presented for further consultation. The deadline to respond to this using the relevant form is **Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> February**. Thereafter, proposals will be modified or withdrawn as appropriate based on the responses received.

### **Scoring System**

In the original consultation, respondents were asked to submit responses on a number of questions. Many of those questions were on a system of scoring ranging from 1 - 5. For example, we asked "Which of the following reasons do you give for not playing for your county team?", and one of the reasons was "You do not want to play chess at a weekend". In the options given, there was a range of answers from 1 - 5, where 1 was "Never" and 5 was "Very Frequently". Thus respondents gave replies ranging from 1 - 5, where 5 was an appraisal, and 1 was not an appraisal. This notwithstanding, please note the comments made in relation to Proposal 5.

To normalise these replies on a 0 - 100 scale, the following process was used to convert them.

- Find the mean score
- Subtract 1 from the mean, to get a mean on a 0 - 4 scale
- Multiply that number by 25, to get a score on a 0 - 100 scale

Where data is presented below, the numbers quoted are on that 0 - 100 scale. Where a response was a Yes/No question, or a discrete choice between a number of options, the percentage is used, thus a 0 - 100 scale is being used automatically.

### **Proposal 1**

The biggest barrier to entering teams into the competition was an inability to find enough players. Counties scored this at 83.04, which ranked it 1<sup>st</sup> in terms of reasons why counties don't enter teams. In terms of the hardest part of being a captain, it was also ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, with 59.09. Players gave it as the number 1 reason why they don't volunteer to be a captain either, with 65.37. Whether real or imagined, the issue of finding enough players came through in all of the questionnaires. There was a slight contradiction in that ideally, counties, captains and players all responded that they would rather have the current team sizes, but clearly this is not sustainable given their other responses.

### Motion

All County Championship to have the following numbers of boards:

- The Open (and Minor) section will remain at 16 players per team.
- The Under 180, 160 and 140 sections will be reduced to 12 players per team; thus all of the grade-restricted sections will be 12 players per team.

### **Proposal 2**

In response to why counties don't enter teams, not being able to find a captain scored 75.00. This was slightly behind not being able to find enough players, but comfortably ahead of the competitiveness of the team and the entry fees. Captains ranked finding enough players to be the biggest problem, but Proposal 1 addresses that issue. In response to a question about what captains find difficult, and a question about why players don't volunteer to be captains, the item ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> was the difficulty in finding a venue. Separately, there were other comments in various responses about the quality of playing venues in general.

### Motion

The ECF maintains a list of venues at which it is recommended County Championship matches must be played. The ECF will be able to provide contact persons and information for those venues. The ECF will only add venues that meet a certain quality threshold to ensure there are no bad experiences with poor venues being used, as has been reported in the past.

### **Proposal 3**

Questions were asked about widening the boundaries between each section and using a mean grade rather than a limit for each player to be under for the grade-restricted sections.

There was a perfect disharmony here, as Unions preferred widening the boundaries, but captains preferred using a mean grade, with counties being between them in both cases. Given the contradiction between the different parties, it was felt necessary to add this to this consultation to gather some more data!

There is interaction between this proposal and Proposal 1. Both options in this proposal assume that it is desirable to run all of the grade-restricted tournaments on the same basis; i.e. either a mean grade or a limited grade, and not a mix of the two as we have now.

The following motions are on an either/or basis.

### Motion A

Run the competition on an average grade basis, rather than a grade limit basis. The sections would thus become:

- Open
- 180 average
- 160 average
- 140 average
- 120 average
- 100 average

### Motion B

Run the competition on a grading limit basis, rather than a mean grade basis. The sections would thus become:

- Open
- Under 180
- Under 160
- Under 140
- Under 120
- Under 100

Note: This assumes that the Minor, as per Proposal 6, will become a part of the Open, and played to Open rules.

### **Proposal 4**

The demographics of county chess are seen as a problem, with very few women and juniors taking part compared with other events.

The following motions are mutually exclusive.

### Motion A

In the Open section, the 16-player teams must include the following:

- At least 1 female player
- At least 1 Under 18 boy
- At least 1 Under 18 girl
- At least 1 Under 11 player

Captains would retain free selection over the other 12 players in their team. Systems similar to this are used in a number of team competitions around the world. For example, Greece has a 10-board competition with 4 free boards, a female player, an Under 20 Boy, an Under 20 Girl, an Under 16 Boy, an Under 16 Girl and an Under 12. Under 18 and Under 11 are seen as better fits in England to distinguish between primary and secondary school.

### Motion B

In the grade restricted sections, if the competition becomes a mean grade competition rather than a grading limit section (see Proposal 3, Motion A), allow the following to count as their grade minus 10 towards the average, to encourage captains to select them.

- Female players
- Under 18 players

Only 1 of each player may be used for this purpose.

### **Proposal 5**

The ECF FIDE-rates the Open section at the moment. The score for FIDE-rating the Open and Minor was 49.25, and 47.88 for FIDE-rating the Open, Minor and Under 180. Thereafter, the scores tailed off.

However, on reflection, we asked the wrong question. We asked people to respond about whether or not it was more likely for them to play, where 5 was much more likely, but 1 was not at all. It might be that an answer of 1 meant that

it would not make them more likely to play, rather than being opposed to the principle of FIDE-rating the tournament in general. As a result, this proposal seeks to clarify what we think the data told us in response to the imperfect question that was asked.

The Open section is already FIDE-rated. In 2016/17, the Minor and Under 180 sections currently have people meeting the membership requirements for FIDE-rated tournaments two-thirds of the time already, even though the tournaments are not FIDE-rated. The lower boards are disproportionately the boards that are not meeting the requirements, and so if the competition is reduced in boards as per Proposal 1, then this problem will be partly reduced. In addition, a number of the players played only one game, and so would not need to be a Gold member as part of the 1-game exemption that exists for FIDE-rated team tournaments. If the competition changes its format as per Proposal 6 from a knockout tournament to something different, then this exemption will still apply, albeit those who do need to become Gold members will now not need to do so for one game. Counties will be charged £10.50 per player who does not meet the membership requirements, in accordance with the current regulations applying to FIDE-rated tournaments.

#### Motion

FIDE-rate the following:

- Open section
- Minor section
- Under 180 section

Given the result of proposal 3, it is acknowledged that a common sense adjustment might need to be made in the light of anything voted on in that proposal.

#### **Proposal 6 - Format of the Competition**

The new format needs to address the following issues.

The biggest reason as to why people do not play is having other plans on the date of the match. Captains scored this at 68.18 and ranked this as number 1 in the list of reasons why players don't play. In particular, the ECF stage being a knockout tournament is a problem, where players do not know whether or not they need to keep the date clear, due to the very nature of a knockout tournament.

Ranked number 2 was the distance involved in travelling to matches, scoring 51.52. At the ECF stage it is particularly true that there are up to four matches involving large amounts of travelling. However, there was a correlation between the distance that players were prepared to travel, and the section - lower-graded players were, in general, less-willing to travel a big distance.

Another issue that came through the comments is that valuable though the Union competitions are to those that have them (see below), occasionally counties have to travel long distances even to play in Union matches, when they have neighbours that are much nearer. In addition, there are some counties that

are not part of a Union, and thus they cannot play in the ECF stage if they want to.

There is some dissatisfaction from respondents in bigger Unions that smaller Unions do not need to play any matches to qualify for the ECF stage, whereas bigger Unions do. For example, the NCCU gets 2 nominations for the Final Stage, but in many sections only takes up 1 of these nominations. There are similar issues in other Unions.

Motions A1 and A2 are either/or, but they are mutually exclusive from Motion B. The flowcharts at the end of this document provide further clarification of motions A1 and A2.

#### Motion A1 – The Open section

In the 2018/19 season, the Open section will be a 6-team League formed by the following:

- The winner of the 2017/18 Open section
- 1 nominee from each of the five Unions

The dates will be prescribed by the ECF. The ECF will organise the venues for the 5 rounds of the competition, which will be held with the aim of organising 1 round in each of the five Unions' areas. At the end of the 2018/19 season, the team that finishes in 6<sup>th</sup> place will be relegated.

The Minor section will become a competition for Open teams not playing in the 6-team League, played to the rules that are in force for the Open. It will be run as one of the Graded sections (see Motion B). The winner of the competition will be promoted to the Open competition for 2019/20.

In the 2019/20 season, and going forward, the Open will remain a 6-team League, with the team in 6<sup>th</sup> place being relegated, and the winner of the Minor being promoted to the Open.

The Union competitions will run in parallel with this, and will not need to be finished by the current deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> March.

#### Motion A2 – The Open section

In the 2018/19 season, the Open section will be contested by 8 teams, based on the following:-

- The winner of the 2017/18 Open section
- The runner up of the 2017/18 Open section
- The winner of the 2017/18 Minor section
- 1 nominee from each of the five Unions

The 8 teams will be divided into two regional groups of 4 (North and South, to reduce travel), featuring 3 matches. The winner of each group will qualify for the Final. The dates will be prescribed by the ECF. The ECF will organise the venues for the competition. At the end of the 2018/19 season, the team that finishes in 4<sup>th</sup> place in each group will be relegated.

The Minor section will become a competition for Open teams not playing in the 8-team competition, played to the rules that are in force for the Open. It will be run as one of the Graded sections (see Motion B). The top 2 teams in the Grand Final of the competition will be promoted to the Open competition for 2018/19.

In the 2019/20 season, and going forward, the Open will remain a 8-team League, with the bottom team in each group of 4 being relegated, and the top 2 teams in the Minor Grand Final being promoted to the Open.

The Union competitions will run in parallel with this, and will not need to be finished by the current deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> March.

#### Motion B - The Graded Sections

Counties are free to enter the tournament directly, and the ECF will run the competition in micro-regions, organised either as a group of 3 or 4 counties playing matches, followed by a 1-day Jamboree Grand Final for the winning county in each micro-region. The Union competitions will run in parallel with this as a separate competition, and will not need to be finished by the current deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> March. This will ensure a short distance is required for travel, and only one "big journey", for the Grand Final.

Alex Holowczak  
ECF Director of Home Chess  
27<sup>th</sup> December, 2017

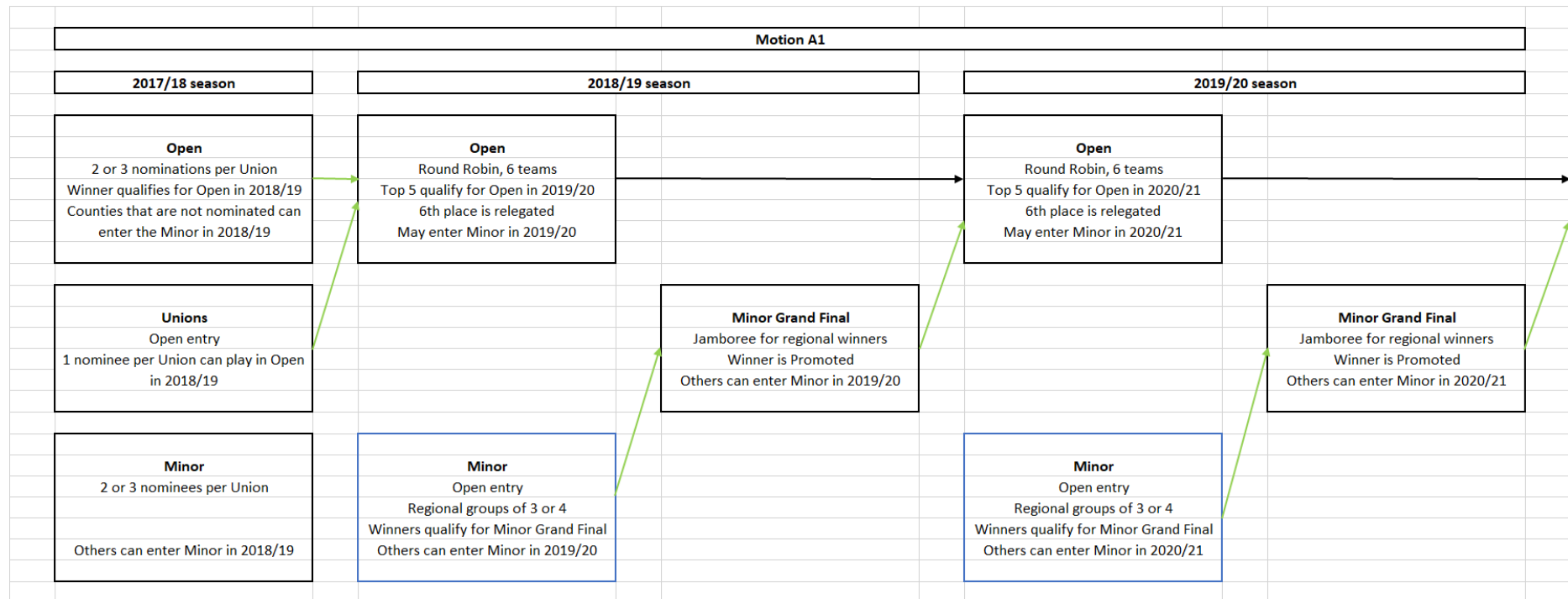
## Motion A1 Flowchart

Key -

Green Arrow The next stage for a nomination, or the winner of a group or Grand Final

Black Arrow The next stage for other teams in the competition

Blue Box Entry points to the competition from 2018/19



## Motion A2 Flowchart

Key -

Green Arrow The next stage for a nomination, or the winner of a group or Grand Final

Black Arrow The next stage for other teams in the competition

Blue Box Entry points to the competition from 2018/19

