

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 13 OCTOBER 2012**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF JUNIOR CHESS AND EDUCATION**

Junior Chess and Education grew this year as a result of committed volunteers—primarily parents and coaches. Their service in formal posts and informally behind the scenes is the greatest junior chess asset, for which I am profoundly thankful. Outside of costs reimbursed by parents, the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust (JRT) funded 100% of the junior budget for the third consecutive year.

International Representation. Fulfilling the strategy to broaden experience, delegations totalling 45 players represented England and the Federation in major championships (i.e., World Youth 2011, European Youth 2012 and U16 Olympiad) since the last AGM. Delegations totalling 51 children played in developmental championships (i.e., World Schools Individual, Glorney-Gilbert-Stokes-Robinson Cups, EU Youth and European Schools Team). Greater detail is contained in the Activity Report and the International Director's report. Objective selection standards, primarily leveraging rating and/or grading data, for the major championships worked well, albeit some refinements are necessary for 2013. Subjective judgment from the Player Development and Selection Committee also largely satisfied the need to apply judgment to the developmental needs of aspiring players. The response of professional coaches to the increased activity is nothing short of awesome. The quality of their interaction with each child is central to our national aspiration to raise England's performance internationally.

Training & Development. Beyond the activity above, a coherent national training and development strategy does not yet exist. Well-established groups continue popular events serving the spectrum of beginners to national elites—schools, clubs, county associations, NCJS, DUKSCC, EPSCA, CSC, NYCA, J4NCL and others. Signs of a program for national elite players, however, are seen in the development of ECF-organised training weekends that prepare teams for international youth championships. The ECF Events Calendar and announcements on the ECF Juniors website supported a modest resurgence in privately organised training and mentoring from model coaches.

Championship Grand Prix. The former John Robinson Junior Grand Prix was transformed into the English Youth Chess Championship Grand Prix. It will award English Youth Championship titles to a boy and a girl in each birth year from age seven and encourages 17 and 18-year-olds to participate in the adult ECF Grand Prix. The JRT continued its support to the prize fund, which is now open to additional donors. More tournaments are included this year and discussions are underway to commission a junior championship in the North and/or Midlands in the Championship Grand Prix 2013/14.

Schools. We are very grateful to Yateley Manor for sponsoring the National Schools Chess Championships for many years. Three new sponsors (Winchester College, St. Catherine's Bramley and Heathside Preparatory School) each signed one-year contracts that tripled

financial resources. Free entry was prioritized to attract state schools. A re-designed and re-launched tournament separated Under 19 and Under 11 Championships to provide a more natural divide for secondary and primary schools. Separate Girls' Championships were established. A pilot program was commissioned to potentially extend the 2013/14 tournaments into the Internet. More generally, ECF-organised events are exploring ways to re-kindle secondary school chess beyond the National Championships tournament.

Counties. Eton College kindly hosted and the Berkshire Junior Chess Association ran a tremendous U18 & U13 County Championships tournament. Entries were up by more than 50% by numbers of players as compared to 2011. Organisation for next year's event is not yet agreed.

Governance. Various improvements were made. Sponsorship contracts in compliance with financial byelaws were put in place for the National Schools Championships. A policy on coaches' fees and allowable expenses was clarified and made more consistent. A code of conduct from past years was updated and reintroduced for international trips. A more open and clear process for running tournaments where Federation titles are awarded was introduced. Membership requirements for Federation events were revised to strike an appropriate balance between outreach (in schools) and commitment to the new membership program.

Lessons. Experience this year validated the direction in which the ECF is evolving to support junior chess. Several lessons were learned, however, that should improve international selection, coordination with county leaders and logistics for trips abroad. I'll discuss specifics at the AGM if Council so wishes. Areas needing greater attention are financial sponsorship, training & development strategy, girls' chess, conversion of the current Accredited Coaches program into a Qualified Coaches program, and defining a clear vision for the Certificate of Merit.

Recommendations for Council. Lack of charitable status unnecessarily limits public support. Financial accounting processes need improvement. Persistent disputes within the chess community erode our ability to resolve issues, work in the same direction, and attract support. Solutions to these include: (1) prioritising charitable status ahead of other structural proposals; (2) adopting a code of conduct that addresses ethics and facilitates dispute resolution; and (3) increasing attention on and resources for financial controls and accounting.

Phil Ehr

Director of Junior Chess and Education

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