

Statement of Tim Woolgar, Candidate for Marketing Director.

I was tremendously honoured to be asked to stand for the role of Marketing Director of the ECF and feel proud to be given the opportunity to present my candidacy.

My credentials are largely based upon practical experience. As some of you may know, I am responsible for promoting the new sport of chessboxing in the UK. I launched London Chessboxing in April 2008 with the ambitious goal of establishing chessboxing as a new sport in this country.

The scale of the challenge has been immense but three years later we have reached a stage where chessboxing is now recognised by a significant percentage of the UK population. Our events attract live audiences of over 1,000 people and chessboxing features regularly in the national and international media. Interest in chessboxing continues to grow and we are on course for official recognition by Sport England within the next six months.

Our charity 'The Chessboxing Organisation' was established in December 2008, recognised by the Charities Commission of England and Wales in September 2009 and continues to provide integrated non-contact boxing and chess coaching for young people in London on a weekly basis.

The success of chessboxing has been founded largely upon a low-budget but energetic process of online and social media marketing combined with a series of successful PR initiatives focused upon raising the profile of the sport in the public consciousness.

My viewpoint has always been that raising awareness of chessboxing also raises awareness of chess, almost as a side-effect. However I have often turned my mind to the idea of promoting chess directly, largely because during the course of the last three years I have been repeatedly surprised by how low the general standing of the game has sunk in the UK. It astonishes me that the most widespread conviction about chess I have come across seems to be rooted in an utter misconception; that chess is a slow moving game played by boring old men with outsize foreheads and restricted social skills.

To me chess is a vibrant, adrenaline-fuelled and at times majestic activity that encapsulates everything one could wish for in a sport. It is a fiercely competitive, creative and fascinating discipline practised by some of the most captivating characters you could hope to meet in a lifetime. As the ECF director of marketing I would aim to dispel the myths and help people see what a marvellous and exciting world we represent.

The ECF speaks to three key audiences; public funding bodies, corporate sponsors, the general population (including chess players). My priority would be to draw up and implement a strategy for communicating meaningfully with these groups with the clear goal of placing chess closer to the forefront of the public imagination and enhancing the capacity of the Federation to realise its wider objectives. This will involve a re-examination of all the resources at our disposal with particular emphasis on the internet and social media marketing. It will also mean communicating more effectively with mass media outlets particularly national newspapers and broadcasters.

We are approaching 40th anniversary of the Fischer-Spassky World Championship. While we may never replicate the worldwide explosion of interest created by this single match, the event nevertheless represents both an inspiration and an example of what may be achieved again.