

Director of Home Chess Report**British Chess Championships**

The 100th Championships attracted a record entry of 1190, which included 794 players. Both of these are records. I am thankful to Lara Barnes and the others on the team for the successful organisation of the Championships.

The 101st Championships will be held in Aberystwyth. It will be necessary to adjust the normal schedule slightly in order to accommodate both the junior events, and the slight overlap with the Olympiad. A schedule is likely to have been published by the time Council meets. A questionnaire published on the tournament website revealed that in terms of the format of the Championships, both players and non-players alike favoured remaining with an 11-round Championship. More than 250 people responded to this questionnaire.

Grading & Website

Grading lists have been published on time. There was an issue with the January Rapidplay list which required republishing a few days later. This was caused by an estimated junior grade that had been added to the system 12 months previously, but was not removed when it should have been. The decision was made to republish the list, but not retroactively recalculate grades over that period of time.

The grading website interface was adjusted. The old interface was created using specialist software with which the replacement webmaster was not familiar, and so the change was made to a new interface that didn't rely on the specialist software.

The decision to move the website to within the ECF website has caused some functionality problems, which at the time of writing, is an issue that is being addressed.

Additional functionality has been added: It is now possible to view congress cross-tables for all congresses submitted since the end of the "Bundles" era, and it is also possible to sort games by date and grading list. Further enhancements are planned to this output, such as allowing PGN files to be submitted.

Integration of League Software with the Grading Website

Specialist software for leagues is being developed. The intention is that this will link into the main grading database, along with an online checker. Administratively, this will reduce the Database Administrator's workload, and will help local graders report their results more efficiently. For players, they will be able to see their league results reported in real-time as captains submit results to the service.

The intention is to allow any ECF-affiliated league, or any other ECF-affiliated body that runs a team event, use of this service for free if they so desire. At the moment, there are two leagues using this on a trial basis. The original intention was for the facility to go live in 2014-15, but this is timeframe may not now be realistic, and will be revised if necessary.

County Championships

I covered this work in the absence of a Manager/Controller. The original intention was to hold the Finals and the Counties' Rapidplay back-to-back, but this never happened because a suitable venue was not available. As a result, the Rapidplay never happened, but the Counties' Finals were moved to the Trident Centre in Leamington Spa. This was perfect for the Warwickshire Championship in March, but air conditioning was needed in the middle of July in two of the smaller rooms that were used.

The Championships themselves had several other problems, some of which I list below:

- (1) The NCCU nominated counties in the wrong order, and in one instance the wrong county altogether. This caused problems with the draw – the nominations were perfectly legal, but not as intended. A more robust process needs to be in place to deal with the issue of transferring from the Union stage to the Final Stage. This is a change that might require rule adjustments in time for 2014-15.
- (2) Counties continue to default matches at the Final Stage, despite accepting nomination. The Under 100 section was particularly disappointing, with 3 defaults out of 6 nominations. There is a £50 fine in place, but this doesn't stop the problem of counties defaulting.
- (3) Membership. In some cases, captains simply never checked the membership status of the teams; in other cases, they were aware they had to check, but made a mistake. The fundamental problem is that, at the moment, it is better to default a board than field a non-member on a board. The penalties must be equivalent to one-another.

The 10-point rule (if changed by Council), and a solution to problem (3) identified above, will be published and implemented in time for the 2013-14 Final Stage.

The issue of grade boundaries will probably have been determined by the time this report is discussed. A Skype meeting was held, which the NCCU did not attend. The Unions, with the exception of the SCCU, were in favour of reducing the sections, but they didn't know how best to do so.

Candidates for the role of National Controller have been found.

National Club Championship

I would like to thank Julie Johnson for her work in this tournament over the years. She has stood down from the role of Controller, and a replacement has been found.

A questionnaire was published several years ago by one of my predecessors, and the entrants said that they wanted the tournament to stay as it was then. This notwithstanding, approximately 25% of the entries have disappeared over the last five years. For this reason, I intend to change the format of the competition, and have a volunteer willing to run it under this format next season.

Women's Chess

It was planned to introduce an English Ladies' Championship in 2012-13, which was separate from the British Championship. After a few false starts, this never materialised. However, it remains an aspiration for 2013-14.