

I was appointed by the Board to the position of International Director in November 2012. At that time I said I was particularly interested in elite development and in using my experience in international team sport to help our England Chess teams. In addition I brought commercial experience to the board and said I would aim to expand the donation base to help fund our international teams.

At the April Council meeting I set out for Council a change in direction which I thought was very important. This involved changing how we view our national teams. Clearly financing the teams is an issue particularly as we go through the changes necessary because of a change in Government support. I believed that to achieve success for our national teams we needed to start with a very much more supportive policy from the ECF (Board and Council). Both organisations supported the following motion:

We believe that the Federation should aim to have the strongest possible England teams competing in the European Team Championships (Open and Women's), the Olympiads (Open and Women's) and the World Youth under 16 Chess Olympiad (Open and, when established, Girls). We believe this is in the long term interest of English chess.

This would not by itself change the finance available but it is an important step in achieving a change of attitude and establishing a basis for higher expectations and support for our teams.

Fund Raising has taken a large part of my time. Firstly I would like to thank all those who have made contributions. We are very fortunate that a number of chess players want to help the England team in this way. We will have strong teams in the European Team Championships to be played in November in Warsaw. I know that the best way to say thank you to our donors and to all the chess players in England will be to perform very well as a team. I believe that in the Open event we can challenge again for medal positions. You can be sure that I, all the players and team captains will be very focussed on achieving excellent results.

However the attempts to widen the donation base have not been as successful as I had hoped particularly through the involvement of Council Members. I believe we have to question the long term funding issue of England teams as we cannot continually rely on a small number of individual donors. I am hopeful that a combination of the move to Charitable Status, increasing focus on working with commercial partners and an increasing membership base will allow us to do more to fund all of the different activities of the ECF.

As far as Elite Development is concerned a few small steps have been taken. To improve at any level players need to play strong opposition. This applies to our top GMs. It can be difficult for them to find events to give them the opportunity to play players of equal or greater strength. But this is what they need to test just how far they can go. I was pleased to help Stephen Gordon participate in the European Individual Championship and he played 8 of his 11 matches against stronger opposition than himself.

I also attempted to organise a 6 game match for Gawain Jones against the French GM Romain Edouard. Unfortunately this has not yet been possible because of lack of funds. But I am hopeful we can make this happen in the next six months.

I would particularly like to thank the following people who helped me in my new role. Ian Reynolds, without the work that he has done over a number of years the task of raising the level of funds needed would not have been possible. David Sedgwick and Sean Hewitt in their roles as Manager Arbiters (International) and International Rating Officer have contributed greatly in areas where I have no expertise. My predecessor Lawrence Cooper has given me help on numerous occasions and has always been very positive in helping me.

As a Board Member I am pleased with the progress the board has made in the following areas:

Improving financial control and reporting

Moving forward on the charitable status project

Achieving value for the ECF from the commercial attraction of holding a championship like the British Championships .Thanks to the efforts of Alex Holowczak and Sean Hewitt in negotiations on Aberswyth.

The success of the 100th British Championships in Torquay

The development of the Membership Scheme

The further development of Junior and Schools chess.

I believe that the Board has made progress in its effectiveness as an organisation during the last year and think it is well positioned to make further progress which is needed over the coming year.

David Openshaw

ECF International Director

September 2013.