

Director of Junior Chess and Education
Annual Report to Council

The ECF's contribution to English junior chess is improving with greater excitement in the English Youth Grand Prix, more dedicated training events to supplement competition, and more children competing in a range of ECF-organised events, particularly the British Junior Championships and the U18/U13 County Championships. The National Schools Championships also enjoy a greater participation and more attention from a new format. Promising juniors are taking advantage of opportunities to develop their international experience in what we call 'developmental championships', whilst players at the 'top table' in junior chess are gaining valuable experience representing England in the major international youth championships. Significant shortfalls exist, however, in ECF-organised training of the 'top table' players (elite development), in girls' chess and coaching qualification. Actions to partially remedy these shortfalls are outlined below. Membership income has not funded Junior Directorate activities in my term, apart from the cost of office support and travel insurance premiums, which are now a benefit of membership for those traveling to representative championships. Parents, three school sponsors and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust fund the Junior Directorate's activities.

On behalf of ECF junior players and their families, I wish to express profound gratitude to the parents, coaches, school teachers, tournament organisers and arbiters who cheerfully dedicate their considerable talent to bring chess into the lives of young people. I am particularly grateful for those who volunteer within the Junior Directorate. We have fortified and extended foundations laid before we arrived. Although I am acutely aware of areas needing improvement, I am pleased to read Junior Director candidates' statements pledging continuity. I hope most of you, aided with the Council's and the Board's support, will continue to serve alongside my successor. The remainder of this report attempts to show progress since my 2011 election statement and present direction. It also serves as a reference as my successor strives to find the right blend of continuity and progress.

Coordination with NCJS, EPSCA, UKSCC, J4NCL, CSC, NYCA, LJCC. If these acronyms are not instantly recognizable, I respectfully submit that the reader does not know junior chess well enough to guide ECF policies effecting national youth chess. If you are one of these, don't worry, active chess parents also find this 'alphabet soup' difficult! These national groups, among others whose offerings infer a national scope (CCF, UKCA, schoolchess.net) produce far more organised chess games than both the combined amateur adult and professional offerings. Adherence to FIDE Laws of Chess and high standards of play are not typical, but these attributes do exist at the top. More fundamentally, these and the myriad of local groups introduce chess to the ever-present next generation. For that reason, and for the pervasive volunteerism by parents, school teachers, coaches and other chess professionals, the ECF Junior Directorate maintains a posture of gratitude and service to the junior community. The next Junior Director should expand interaction with these groups.

The type of collaboration possible with these groups is illustrated by our interaction with Mike Basman. His tournament—the largest in the world—produces the bulk of nominations for the ECF's Player Development and Selection Committee to consider

playing for England in the World and European Schools Individual Championships. Although his nominations do not necessarily convert to ECF invitations, his tournament provides a dedicated opportunity for the under-represented North. In return, Mike has promoted the British Junior Championships and recommended modest changes to the ECF membership structure (not specifying the cost) that would enable him to promote ECF membership more effectively. Although modest in generating current income, such collaboration improves the joined-up aspect of junior chess. Such collaboration also contrasts with the lack of consultation or collaboration shown when we, the Board, established a £50 fee for including ungraded tournaments on the ECF calendar, a decision implemented swiftly by removing ungraded events already present. The junior community felt aggrieved by the manner of this action and its disproportionate impact. Emotive public discussions involving Board members appeared on the English Chess Forum. After a few months, the Board granted a waiver to ungraded junior tournaments. Months later we implemented the waiver by returning ungraded junior events to the ECF calendar. The damage caused by this episode persists in complaints I continue to receive claiming (now erroneously) that the ECF charges for junior tournaments to be on the ECF calendar (we have not attempted to charge since January); that we do not believe junior organisers support ECF membership (junior organisers' support is clear); and that we did not sufficiently apologise for the unnecessary unpleasantness, which I do now—unreservedly.

Secondary Schools. A deliberate strategy to revive chess in secondary schools began last year with voluntary service from Dr Neill Cooper, an acclaimed mathematics teacher and leader of an award winning chess club at the Wilson's School in Croydon. With my blessing and in full disclosure to the Board, he introduced two series of new ECF competitions among secondary schools: weekend rapidplays in Eton College and King School Grantham; and one-day afternoon tournaments in Surrey and Bedfordshire. These tournaments prominently carried the ECF brand into secondary schools, where it was met with enthusiastic response from teachers and pupils, and showed signs of proliferating. Teachers identified benefits inherent with school competitions, specifically affirmation of chess players by their peers and the opportunity for pupils to earn chess grades when presented with proper tournament conditions. Unfortunately, these were discontinued as ECF activities when Neill resigned as National Secondary Schools Co-ordinator in response to my failure to persuade colleagues of the wisdom of this strategy for both chess and the ECF.

The extent of ECF activities in secondary schools is described on the ECF Juniors website under 'Schools'. Unlike others who have resigned and withheld their services or cooperation, I regard Neill's action as necessary to preserve effective headway of chess in secondary schools. (In addition to activities described above, he was in the process of developing another ECF competition called the 'Team Chess Challenge', patterned from the Team Maths Challenge and the Senior Team Maths Challenge pervasive in UK secondary schools. The Team Chess Challenge is now underway, with a national championship at Imperial College London, absent of ECF branding.) The emotive public discussion among ECF Directors, Neill and others on the English Chess Forum was unfortunate; but the discussion does present background for Council to make the strategic choice presented by the SCCU's proposed resolution.

Elite Player Development. Although we celebrate players who are surging toward FM/WFM, IM/WIM and GM/WGM titles, these players rely on their own support networks for training. The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust also assists the most promising

juniors with its annual Fellowship and occasionally other support. Recognising that players on the cusp of these titles are unlikely to devote themselves to ECF-led training, our **priority is to create a cadre of mutually supportive juniors** who are internationally competitive and continue playing into adulthood. In one small step within the constraints of voluntary talent, key members of the Player Development and Selection Committee have agreed to organise in-tournament coaching in classical tournaments such as Hastings. This project aims to replicate major youth championships conditions more affordable. A need exists for an Elite Junior Development Officer to provide individual attention to the truly elite. Recruitment has not yet been successful.

Girls' Squad. After a long hiatus of meaningful initiatives in girls' chess and high demand, arrangements are underway to launch a Girls' Squad for English, Welsh and Scottish girls. The idea is to publish a paper newsletter (maybe quarterly) with girls' news, and opportunities to compete in open tournaments supported by coaches. The Norwegian Girls' Championships and Hastings are the first intended Girls' Squad opportunities. In the interest of aligning with EPSCA's U11 Girls' Squad we are aiming at 12-year-olds and older. A committee is forming under Sarah Hegarty's leadership, supported by Jovanka Houska and other female leaders from England and neighboring nations.

Junior Directorate Bursary. This is newly established to assist families experiencing financial hardship. Appropriately experienced personnel are in place to assess need. The fund is empty; however, the John Robinson trustees have agreed to donate funds reserved for hardship support. Efforts are underway to raise additional funds, but the fact that the ECF is not a registered charity places the bursary at a philanthropic disadvantage.

Junior Selection. Players are responding well to the current selection policy. They are also expecting continuity of the main feature for 2014 selections, including target grades and junior selection norms. The next Junior Director will update the policy for Board approval, informed by the annual consultation and the priority to create a cadre of mutually supportive juniors. Issues raised this year by parents and coaches are:

- (1) whether ECF-organised coaching for the World & European Youth & Schools Championships should continue to be mandatory;
- (2) whether all players should bear an equal share of all coaching costs;
- (3) whether the target ratio of four players to one coach is too expensive;
- (4) whether a large number of players in the developmental championships have undermined the luster of representing England;
- (5) whether the 'invited players' in the major championships (one per section) should continue to be determined by the highest rating;
- (6) the timeline for assembling players and coaches, and the resulting period for focused preparation;
- (7) whether a self-forming developmental team is appropriate for the World Youth Under 16 Olympiad; and
- (8) what the appropriate qualification award should be for the British Junior Champions.

Major Championships. Participation is shown below with notes. The fact that we earned no medals in the official FIDE championships is consistent with the early stages of building strategy. Bearing in mind that British society's support for chess is not as strong

as support found in the traditional powerhouse federations, our juniors are progressing well. Nonetheless, greater effort in elite development is indicated.

- World Junior U20, Turkey – 2 players; 1 coach. Responsibility for this transferred to the Junior Directorate. We initially chose to honour a Foreign Office travel advisory by withdrawing ECF's participation, encouraging the host federation to move the tournament to a more secure location. Our withdrawal disappointed many, particularly a GM norm contender. Within two weeks of the opening ceremony, the organisers announced its relocation to a more secure location. To my knowledge, we are the only federation who participated on short notice after initially having stood down. Sadly, the British Under 21 Champion could not participate.
- World Youth 2012, Slovenia – 34 players and 9 coaches. World Youth 2013 is scheduled for December with 24 players and 6 coaches.
- European Youth 2013, Montenegro – 23 players and 6 coaches.
- World Youth U16 Olympiad 2013, China – One team of 5 and one self-forming development team of 4, supported by 2 coaches. The U16 Olympiad was included in Council's April 2013 resolution that established a funding priority the international teams.

Developmental Championships

- World Schools 2013, Greece – 48 players, 12 coaches
- European Schools 2013, Serbia – 25 players, 7 coaches
- Glorney, Gilbert, Robinson and Stokes Cups, Wales – 20 players, 3 coaches
- EU Youth 2013, Czech Republic: 3 players and 1 coach
- European Youth U18 Team, Slovenia – one girls' team of 2 players; no coach

The logistics required for this volume of players, coaches and parents is massive, overwhelmingly provided by Junior Directorate volunteers. Online registration created by Andrew Walker, ECF webmaster, significantly improved our capacity.

English Youth Grand Prix. This Grand Prix is one way the ECF supports the major junior tournaments. The Grand Prix's scoring system favours tournaments that attract juniors with higher grades, which will naturally shift over time; and heightens players' focus on the ECF grading system; the grade-based and performance-based qualification criteria for the World and European Youth.

North of England Junior Chess Championships. Collaboration toward a new regional championship tournament includes organisers in Yorkshire, Manchester, Newcastle and the Midlands. The championship title awarding authority would remain in the region. The ECF would support by inclusion in the English Youth Grand Prix and probably occur in the middle or end of the autumn term 2014.

National U18/U13 County Championships. These were hosted at Haberdasher Askes' Boys' School and organised by the Hertfordshire Schools Chess Association (HSCA) at the traditional time, between end-of-year exams and the end of the summer term for many independent schools. The excellent venue, the superb organization and the splendid weather made the event a success. I am pleased to report that participation increased again over the previous record year, thus making it the largest ever. The next event will be organised by Manchester Junior Chess in a location to be determined.

Note: The initial registration form reflected the traditional requirements for this event. Council's guidance on membership did not apply due to the longstanding practice of ECF events being exempt from grading fees. Nonetheless, HCSA and I implemented the spirit of the membership resolution commensurate with the profile of juniors who traditionally participate. In view of the registration form, the Board directed a change in grading and membership requirements for all ECF tournaments. HCSA and I duly implemented the new guidance by grading the U18 and U13 Major Championships (therefore requiring membership); and not grading the U13 Minor Championship (not requiring membership). The Board's guidance, as a technical matter, also removed the necessity for the traditional exception being included a paper delivered to Council in April that documented all remaining membership exceptions. I should have brought to Council's attention then the effect on the Board's decision on this event and the National Schools Championship, for which I apologize. Participation in this U18/U13 County Championships, however, did not appear to be adversely affected.

National Schools Championships. This important tournament was run for the first time in four sections—U19, U19 Girls, U11 and U11 Girls. The two open sections (U19, U11) were similar to the traditional National Schools format from previous years, whilst the two Girls' sections were run with northern and southern semifinals leading to the combined National Schools finals at Uppingham. Three sponsoring schools—Winchester College, St Catherine's, Bramley and Heathside Preparatory—combined with volunteers to make this event possible. The new sections did not run as smoothly as envisioned. Lessons were identified and most were corrected for this year. Changes this year include:

- U19: a slight modification to the traditional age handicap, reducing its effect. In accordance with present guidelines, membership is required to participate. Games in the zone finals and knock-out stages will be graded.
- U11: Four first-round fixtures for over-the-board play plus a new Internet zonal; all leading to a final collocated with the U19 Championship. Membership is required. All over-the-board games will be graded.
- U19 Girls and U11 Girls: These will run concurrently in northern and southern semi-finals leading to a final in the spring term at St Catherine's, Bramley. The reason for separating the finals is to provide girls the opportunity to represent their school in both the Girls' and Open Championships. A decision was taken to not require ECF membership to encourage more participation in its second year; therefore, these championships will not be graded. As of this writing one girls' school that competed last year withdrew citing that their players did not want to play in an ungraded competition. We nonetheless anticipate greater participation by refraining from administrative requirements this year.

The three sponsoring schools have returned. Principal organisers this year are Andrew Martin, Richard Haddrell, Julian Clissold, Richard Boddy, David Archer and John Place. It is hard to overstate the importance of the National Schools Championships' potential to advance the ECF's mission to 'promote chess ... as an attractive means of cultural and personal advancement and to foster the highest level of achievement in the game'.

Certificate of Excellence (CoE) and Certificate of Merit (CoM). Council will be aware of the history of these legacy programmes. The CoE manager, Peter Turner and his wife Gill, continue to operate the CoE and organise junior coaching with the proceeds. The CoM manager, John Upham, operates the CoM. Material stocks are being distributed more widely in England. Occasional new interest, particularly from Africa, gives

credence the CoM's latent potential. The policy with both the CoE and the CoM is to support them with presence on the ECF website and to ensure they remain financially self-sustainable, provided the volunteers wish to continue and their efforts help participants learn.

Junior Clubs and Centres of Excellence. The Junior Clubs Co-ordinator, John Kendell, is making modest progress in the Midlands, where he is based, helping clubs and schools connect with one another. He has also taken on the challenge to review the purpose and support required for the Centres of Excellence programme. John would appreciate assistance.

ECF Coaches. The intended conversion of Accredited Coaches to Qualified Coaches is universally supported. Implementation is proving more difficult, primarily because I prioritized time with other projects. Unresolved questions involve compliance with the Government's DBS regulations and education industry standards for recurring checks. The Qualified Coaches framework is: (1) three levels of qualification for domestic coaching—foundation, club and national; (2) coaches on ECF-organised trips do not necessarily need a 'national coach' qualification (i.e., Under 7 players so far have not required the services of 'national coaches'); (3) ECF qualification from different coaching courses is appropriate (e.g., courses from Nottingham, CSC, FIDE); and (4) it should be introduced as a pilot scheme and rapidly progress to self-financing. Meanwhile the CSC is producing large numbers of foundation level coaches and placing them in schools. Interestingly, by the end of the academic year, 111 trainee schoolteachers in just one teachers' college in Cardiff will have completed a chess trainer's course.

English Junior Rapidplay. The London Chess Classic successfully ran the 2012 edition and will run it again this year.

National Girls' Chess Championships. The National Girls' 2013 was originally organised as a two-day festival in Bolton in July. The festival included a GM simul and training with popular coaches. Low registration leading to the event drove my decision to postpone it. Full refunds and limited compensation was paid to registrants. The event is re-scheduled as a one-day National Girls' Championship in Nottingham on 30 November, in a bespoke standard and rapidplay format. Planning has begun now for the National Girls' 2014 to be conducted in the familiar format of regional semifinals leading to a final in the autumn term to avoid a crowded calendar in the summer term and to provide an extra event for girls toward the beginning of the English Youth Grand Prix.

Note: The tournament awarding the ECF's National Girls' Championship title was first conducted in 2011 in a rapidplay format of regional semi-finals leading to a final. The National Girls' 2012 suffered from inadequate planning and poor execution, which triggered my decision to place all Junior Directorate tournaments (except for the National Schools Championships) where ECF junior titles are awarded under modified open tendering procedures. These tendering standards addressed ECF promotion, financial oversight and timing. The tendering specification also gave priority to incumbent organisers. Tendering was successful, as demonstrated by the London Chess Classic taking the English Junior Rapidplay and the Hertfordshire School Chess Association taking the National U18/U13 County Championship. No tendering offer was received for the National Girls', so Junior Directorate volunteers organised it.

Lapses in Good Conduct. The following cases were addressed primarily within the Junior Directorate. Board oversight was in place where appropriate. The purpose in reporting these to Council are to: (1) **deter** future transgressions; (2) provide context for Council and the Board to consider codes of **ethics and conduct**; (3) encourage the chess community to review **child protection**; and (4) highlight the requirement to ensure continued access to **legal advice**.

- A junior was caught using a mobile phone chess engine during a non-ECF FIDE-rated tournament in England. FIDE deferred action to the ECF. The FIDE Handbook indicated a three-year exclusion; however, the ECF had no authority to sanction players outside of ECF-organised events. In view of the player's age and contrition, the Board imposed a two-year exclusion from ECF-organised events; and offered to reduce the exclusion to one year on condition that the junior voluntarily refrained from playing any graded or rated game for one year and provide an electronic file of all games played in the preceding year, thus providing an opportunity to redeem other potential instances of cheating. The parents and player accepted this voluntary condition. The child is likely to resume tournament chess having matured from this episode.
- Complaints were received about ECF adults (i.e., any of officials, arbiters, coaches, players, organisers) who engaged young ECF chess players on social media in naïve juvenile banter about sexually explicit material, including sexual imagery directly related to chess, to the extent that the social media provider apparently responded. Parents were informed. The material was removed with no apparent damage to the young chess player's future or the adults' employability.
- Complaints were received about an ECF adult who published false claims, viewed online more than 13,000 times, thereby showing potential to cause serious damage to reputation and employability. The Board discussed the matter. No action is contemplated.
- A law enforcement authority notified the ECF of its assessment that a high risk of a future criminal offence existed. For legal reasons, details of the notification cannot be disclosed; however, it implied a responsibility for the ECF to apply preventive measures for all chess tournaments nationally. Although I am personally satisfied that the risk in this case was sufficiently mitigated, the chess community lacks the means to adequately address physical risk to players or reputational risk to the game.
- Recommendations:
 - The next Board should pursue an array of measures to deter cheating, including: (1) emphasis on the fundamental point that chess operates in the ethical environment demanded and policed by players; (2) publish the sanctions imposed in cases such as this; (3) explore a system of post-game analysis currently operated by the leading online organisers; (4) explore controls on electronic devices, such as those contemplated in the proposed FIDE Laws of Chess.
 - Council members should help draft a code of ethics and conduct that reflects the chess community's expectations for ECF members' behaviour in our various roles, face-to-face and online. Sanctions for violations may be acceptable by means of an opt-in scheme.
 - The next Director of Junior Chess and Education should review the child protection policy to ensure it adequately addresses social contact

between ECF adults and ECF children, face-to-face and online. This would not be an easy review, but would clarify by first answering the question of ECF coaches and juniors, where a choice could be taken to adopt standards in professional education, where schoolteachers are generally prohibited from 'friending' their pupils on Facebook. Not all ECF coaches, however, coach in schools.

A Bright Future. Despite unresolved issues and occasionally divergent strategic decisions, the pictures of juniors on the ECF website show that we are collectively enriching their lives and strengthening the standing of chess in England. We may confidently aim higher.

Phil Ehr