

I shall outline the actions of each area of my Directorship during 2014-15.

Arbiters

Several courses have been organised throughout the year, and the number of Level 1 Arbiters has increased as a consequence. The course run at Coulsdon in late August last year attracted criticism for the time taken to mark the papers, and subsequent delays in notification of people of their results and marking the papers. David Sedgwick, the Course Instructor, has accepted full responsibility for this and has apologised privately and publicly, an apology which he has asked me to repeat by way of this paragraph of my report. Introducing the status of Level 1 Arbiter has added a further 18 names to the list; at the time of writing a course is ongoing which will hopefully add to that list of names!

Armed Forces Liaison

Proactive attempts to do something in this area have not yielded success. However, the 2016 NATO Championships are being held in England, and John Higgs has been in contact with the Organiser of the event, who had various questions about how the ECF could assist.

British Championships

Organisers have traditionally been reluctant to hold the tournament inland, but the University of Warwick provided an excellent venue in terms of playing conditions, and a record number of entrants. The areas of improvement were the “speed” events; the Rapidplay and Blitz entries were the highest they had ever been. The two-day Rapidplay at the start of the event proved popular and generated a lot of positive comments. The Blitz attracted far more casual entries on the day than the Rapidplays had. The Under 8s and Under 9s increased in numbers too; this bodes well for the future of the junior event, and the number of entries for junior events exceeded that of Torquay too. Regrettably, the Championship trophy has been damaged in transit after the event, and at the time of writing, the financial implications of repairing it are being investigated. The production of the commentary has received some public criticism, and this is highest on the agenda of things to fix in 2016.

Calendar

The calendar format was changed, with a view to adding increased functionality. Improvements of some sort have been mooted for some time, but after inactivity on my part, Phil Ehr picked up the baton this year to help initiate the changes. The new calendar has increased functionality in that it can be filtered to remove events, and filter for certain times of the year. The initial public reaction was about 50/50, but over time, the complaints have outweighed those who like the changes, and they have kept coming. I have communicated this feedback to Phil. Phil supports keeping the calendar as it is in the short term, and so nothing has been done to change it back.

County Championships

The tournament ran smoothly, with the main controversy being the penalty imposed on Yorkshire in the Under 160 Championship. It was unfortunate that the Yorkshire captain based his team on Yorkshire grades rather than an ECF grading list, and had not used the check provided by the ECF so that teams could avoid the penalty. This notwithstanding, further refinements to this rule will be made by the time of the AGM, with the aim that unless there is cheating going on, rather than

administrative mistakes, the result on the day is the result of the match. The SCCU are making further proposals of its own to the AGM.

Grading

F grades were announced last September on the grading website, and implemented in January. There have been favourable responses to this both directly and on public forums. However, there have been some negative comments from others. There may have been some misunderstanding about the intention of F grades initially, but their status as indicators has been made clearer over time. As with all changes to the grading system, the introduction of F grades last season is continuously under review.

Minimum Criteria for Grading Eligibility

This was part of last year's election address, and a draft of these is sitting in my to-do list. It has been delayed a few times because there was always something on the horizon that would require an addition of some sort before publishing. The latest one was the Anti-Cheating measures introduced by FIDE. It is mostly an attempt to combine a series of documents that already exist haphazardly in various places into one simple document – very little is new. There will come a time when I bite the bullet and publish, and this may have happened between the time I wrote this and the meeting.

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix for 2014-15 has progressed smoothly, with trophies being purchased and awarded as part of routine business in the forthcoming months. Tradewise have come on board as sponsors of the 2015-16 Grand Prix, which will boast a prize fund, and an additional range of prizes already announced on the website.

National Club

The plan for the National Club has been to continue organising it in the same way, after the restructuring of the event last year. In 2015, the event increased from 18 to 24 entries.

Prisons Chess

Visits have occurred in HMP Coldingley, HMP Wandsworth, HMP Full Sutton, HMP Leicester and HMP & YOI Bronzefield. Each prison has established a chess club. Carl Portman writes in *InsideTime*, the Prisons' Magazine. A full report appeared on the website a short while ago.

Womens Chess

The £2,000 budget has been allocated in various ways: A prizefund towards a newly created English Women's Championships, and assisting with the funding for the English women playing in the Women's European Club Cup. These events will fall into the 2015-16 financial year.