

**ECF Annual General Meeting
17 October 2015
Report for Junior Directorate**

C23.9.4.2

It has been an honour to be the Director of Junior Chess and Education for the past 12 months. I am enormously appreciative of the huge amount of support that I have received from the Junior Directorate team who are all volunteers and have freely given of their time, expertise and enthusiasm. Special thanks go to Jim Wadsworth who has worked extremely hard for the ECF for the last 4 years and is stepping down now to concentrate on other areas of his very busy life.

It has been a busy and challenging year in which I have endeavoured to begin to achieve the long term plans that I outlined in my election address last year.

Development of the Junior Directorate – the roles, responsibilities and workload of volunteer posts were reviewed early in 2016 followed by the development of a new structure. The new structure sees the old Business Manager post being split into 2 new roles as it was too large. We will still have a business manager post but in addition there will be a Head of Junior International Events. In addition some posts within the directorate have been removed, some changed and renamed and some new posts have been created. The aim is to spread out workload and to create a more effective and transparent structure that our members can understand easily. We will be making the changes over the next 6 weeks.

In November 2014, we wrote the first draft of the Junior Directorate Strategic Plan. Since then we have continued to develop the plan more in line with the overall ECF strategic aims. Our overarching aim is to develop opportunities and a quality experience for juniors playing chess in England as well as to encourage them to continue playing into adulthood. In order to do this we need to create a financially and organisationally stable directorate.

The successful launch of the ECF Chess Academy – The Academy has been set up to enable development of juniors at any age and level toward “elite” player status and support further development of current “elite” players. This is a large collaborative project which has taken considerable effort to put into place. Andrew Martin has been appointed Head of the Academy and is leading the programmes. The first 3 year programme to support players at international level is starting in January 2016 and will have 30 students. Within 3 years we expect to have up to 90 students studying at any one time on this programme alone. All members of the academy (junior ECF gold members) who meet the entry criteria can apply for any programme offered by the academy. The first academy prospectus can be found on the website and is also available as a hard copy.

The academy has 4 “tiers” which correspond to levels of playing ability. Tiers are supported in different ways such as teaching programmes, support programmes, networks, learning resources and benefits such as access to external support mechanisms. We are grateful to the family of Neil Carr, who following his unexpected death earlier this year set up a generous 10 year scholarship for

the International Programme at the ECF Chess Academy. An announcement was made at the closing ceremony of the 2015 British Championships that from 2016 onwards the Winner of the Under 10 British Championships each year would be awarded a one year scholarship

Over the next year I aim to set up a focus group of elite players and their parents to investigate how we can best develop the elite tier of the academy (those players seeking FIDE titles). We have a wealth of ambitious and highly talented junior players who have successfully achieved title norms and ratings this year or who have come very close and we aim to support them further and to use their experience to guide us to help others. I also intend to set up a working party of interested individuals and organisations to look at developing the local and regional tier (those beginning to play chess up to those playing for their region) of the academy. This will look at how best to work with existing organisations, materials, programmes and competitions to encourage and enhance chess playing across the whole of the country. This will also ultimately link in with development of coaching qualifications.

National Schools Chess Championships

This has expanded over the year and now includes the National Schools Team Chess Challenge. All 5 of these championship competitions are becoming increasingly popular and it is especially pleasing to see an increase in the involvement of senior schools. Neill Cooper has proved an extremely able Manager of Schools Chess, aided by his competent team of national co-ordinators Richard Haddrell (U19 Championships), Julian Clissold (U9 and U11 Championships), Andrew Martin (U11 and U18 Girls Championships) and Phil Becket who has acted as Neill's deputy for Secondary Schools Chess. All the Championships were well organised with a good level of school entries. Nonsuch School won the National Schools U19 Girls' Chess Championship and Howell's School won the National Schools U11 Girls' Championship. My thanks to St Catherine's School in Bramley for hosting and sponsoring the girls' championship. The winners of the 2014/15 National Schools Chess U19 Chess Championship was won by Haberdashers' Aske's School. Thanks to Winchester College for their continued sponsorship of this event. The Hall School won the National Schools U11 Chess Championship. My thanks to Heathside Preparatory School for their generous sponsorship and their support of junior chess over many years and also to Uppingham School for hosting the event once again.

International events

Developmental events - We sent a delegation to the European Schools Chess Championships which took place in Turkey in June-July. This event is seen by the ECF as developmental for its players and excellent preparation for playing at major international events. We were delighted that Anum Sheikh achieved a bronze medal and WFM title in the U9 girls section. We were unable to send teams to the 2016 World Schools Chess Championships mainly because the timing of the event clashed with primary and secondary schools exams and preparation. However, shortly after I took up office in October 2015 we sent a small group to the World Schools Chess Championships in Brazil, there were some very good scores achieved by players, although the event was smaller than in previous years.

The Glorney Gilbert International 2015 was held in Ireland this year and was an excellent event, highly praised for its organisation by all 4 countries who took part. As this is a developmental event for England, we actively chose to take players who would benefit from the experience and be able to use it to develop their chess. In the Glorney Cup both England and Ireland achieved 19 ½ points to come first, this was repeated in the Gilbert Cup except the score was 12 ½ points. England came 2nd in the Robinson Cup with 19 points and won the Stokes Cup with 21 points. England are once again the hosts of the competition in 2016.

Major events –

At the time of writing the ECF have just sent a delegation to the European Youth Chess Championships in Croatia. There is a delegation prepared for the World Youth Chess Championships in Greece starting 25th October, this is a smaller group than originally expected as some players and families felt unable to commit to the event with the difficult financial situation in Greece at the time players needed to register for the event.

The postponed 2015 U16 World Olympiad was held shortly after I took up office and unfortunately, it was not possible to raise a team in the time available, mainly due to lack of availability of players immediately before Christmas. The 2016 U16 World Olympiad was cancelled and re-arranged to occur in Mongolia in August. Unfortunately this meant that players who had registered interest to play in the Olympiad were no longer available and we would have had to field a rather weak team (mostly 1900 and below). As this event is considered major rather than developmental event, we decided not to enter a team. As an alternative, the ECF decided to support a team entering the U18 European Youth Team Championships, which was held in July in Poland. There were notable performances by team members Andrew Horton, Ravi Haria, Matthew Wadsworth and William Claridge Hansen.

Two players, Ezra Kirk and Amy Hoare represented England at the World Junior Chess Championships U20 held in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia 1-16 September. Both players had a difficult tournament but Amy assures me that it was a worthwhile tournament in terms of chess development.

The Junior Bursary Fund was set up last year to ensure that no junior missed out on playing at an ECF registered international event for which they were selected due to genuine financial hardship. The fund has proved successful in both attracting small donations from parents and ensuring that a number of players have been able to attend the World and European Youth Chess Championships. My thanks to John Higgs and Jim Wadsworth for all their hard work with this.

The ECF continues to market its brand and to create team recognition through its distinctive England Team Shirts and England Event Badges. These are only awarded to junior players who are selected through a stringent selection process based on achieving set targets and are highly prized. The new selection policy is aimed at enabling players to participate in ECF registered international events that are suited to their level of skill and commitment.

England juniors have gained title norms this year at events across Europe including at the British Chess Championships. This includes Alan Merry (IM and GM), Ravi Haria (IM), Akshaya Kalaiyahalan (WFM and WIM), Joseph McPhillips (IM) and Anum Sheikh (WFM).

Junior chess events around the country

I have tried to organise, support or attend as many events and projects as possible around the country especially those related to girls chess, the English Youth Grand Prix, the Junior 4NCL, the UKCC, EPSCA, the British Championships, the ECF counties U18 and 13 competitions and many others.

The English Youth Grand Prix has gone from strength to strength this year under the management of Charles and Christine Golding. I managed to attend events all around the country and had the opportunity to speak and work with parents and organisers. The EYGP produced 24 section winners (12 boys and 12 girls) who have the chance to play internationally as a result if they meet other selection requirements as well. Each winner also received a cash prize (£100 per section) donated by the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust.

The 2014 English Girls Chess Championships were held in December at the Olympia at the same time as the London Chess Classic. This was a great opportunity for girls to play against each other and to meet with strong chess players and role models such as WGM Jennifer Shahade. Winners were offered the chance to play internationally if they met other selection requirements as well. My thanks to Malcolm Pein and his team for helping make this event possible

The ECF U13/18 County Championships were held at Grantham in Lincolnshire. My thanks go to Phil Becket for organising this and to Kings School for hosting it. The U18 Major section winners were Middlesex and the Minor section winners were Lincolnshire. In the U13 Championships, the Major section winners were Middlesex and the Minor section winners were Leicestershire.

Whilst not ECF initiatives no junior report would be complete without congratulations and thanks to Chess in Schools and Communities (CSC), United Kingdom Chess Challenge (UKCC), English Primary School Chess Association (EPSCA), National Chess Junior Squad (NCJS), Junior Four Nations League (J4NCL) National Youth Chess Association (NYCA) and all the many organisations in England who contribute so much to the junior chess scene.

Traci Whitfield

Director of Junior Chess and Education