

Election Statement of Phil Ehr
Re-election as ECF Chief Executive
September 2015

“Keep Calm and Raise Your Standards”

Leonard Barden and Garry Kasparov were recently critical of English chess. Barden says that English juniors earn insufficient medals. Kasparov observes we have no IMs under 18. I agree. England can do better. The Federation needs to address such shortfalls.

During my four years as a director, the ECF has corrected part of the problem. We expanded access to the European and World Youth Championships. Green shoots are apparent in the set of recent IM norms, some youth medals and camaraderie among high achieving juniors—for example, the English players in this year’s European Youth U18 Team and the World Junior U20 Championships. If re-elected, I will continue to support the next step: development of national level training in the ECF Academy led by our capable director of junior chess and education. From an organisational point of view, youth chess is now established as core Federation business alongside the adult international teams, central support to leagues, clubs and congresses, the British Championships, other national championships, grading and rating, and collective stewardship of chess itself. For the sake of our future, I am working to extend the roots of youth chess deeper into the Federation’s operations.

Some successes over the past two years that illustrate my suitability for continued service as chief executive include gathering an array of talented volunteers, such as our president whose public activities reflect positively on chess and the Independent Constitutional and Governance Review Commission whose report I commend. I work with professional colleagues on important projects in the Courts (e.g., the judicial review), in Parliament (the APPG) in Government (the DCMS consultation), in the business community (Tradewise sponsorship), in schools and with occasional talks (e.g., Chess Arbiters Association) and public interviews.

Although there is much to celebrate, particularly the talented array of community-minded volunteers, greater participation and public profile, we must also address shortfalls in chess administration. To that end, the following shows my orientation for the next term. In all these, collective responsibility of the Board applies. I respectfully ask Council to elect directors who are ready for senior executive responsibility and:

- Understand, accept and respect collective responsibility and the principles in the *Voluntary Code of Good Governance for the Sport and Recreation Sector*.
- Re-commit themselves to delivering a credible strategic plan (informed by member input) that recognises the Federation’s *de facto* role as the national governing body.

- Advance diversity beginning with female participation. Absent an effective effort make the slightest progress in girls and women's chess, the spending disparity for the international teams (£26,000 for Open/Men, £10,000 for Women, nil for girls and boys) reflects poorly. I wish to lead a Board willing to devote energy and spending to greater effect.
- Take better care of volunteers. Support professional development of arbiters through the Chess Arbiters Association. Align appropriate resources for the job. One example: volunteers at this year's British Championships delivered an excellent event; however, Board-approved resources were not applied to technical side.
- *Consult* on modernising an improved national rating system. Modern chess requires it.
- Institute basic project management for all ECF championship events and to include a more effective degree of Board review.
- Embrace governance changes in the Independent Review's report, and include the public integrity principles outlined last in my election statement last year.

A mix of structural impediments, differing views of strategy and personal incompatibilities hold the Federation's development back. The last of these three is unacceptable. We have had problems this year. If re-elected, I will do my part to buttress professional behaviour at all times. People and organisations are susceptible to human failings. We are primarily doing very well. I would be honoured to continue serving.

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