



eNewsletter September 2016 – Issue 7



You will find in this eNewsletter short intros to links you can click on if we have managed to whet your appetite. Some of the links will take you to a page dedicated to the eNewsletter which will appear simultaneously on the website and will contain exclusive material. Other links will lead to items on the website which you may have missed the first time around but may be interested in reading now.

If you did not find this eNewsletter in either your inbox or spam and you are reading this some other way, please email us at office@englishchess.org.uk. You can also access the eNewsletter via the [page on the ECF website](#) where you will also find the archive of previous editions

If you have any chess news you think we should know about or if you have any comments you would like to make on this newsletter, do contact us at manager.publicity@englishchess.org.uk – the deadline for the newsletter will normally be on the 18th of each month so don't send us the info too late!

— Mark Jordan, Publicity Manager

THE BIG STORY – THE BAKU CHESS OLYMPIAD



Top news since the last eNewsletter is of course the Baku Chess Olympiad where the United States edged out Ukraine on tie-break to win Gold for the first time in decades. A new chapter for chess in the USA? England achieved the best result since 2002, coming equal 4th on match points and 9th after tie-break. An article summing up the Olympiad can be found at <http://www.englishchess.org.uk/baku-olympiad-round-up/>. Blow by blow accounts of progress in the event precede the round-up article on the website.

ECF NEWS

ECF Annual General Meeting

This will be held in Birmingham at the Britannia Hotel and will begin at 1.30pm. Papers for the meeting can be found here at <http://www.englishchess.org.uk/about/ecf-council-and-board/>

A list of those standing for elected posts can be found at <http://www.englishchess.org.uk/candidates-for-the-elections-to-be-held-at-the-2016-agm/#more-37795>

New Grading Administrator for the ECF appointed!

For the full story – <http://www.englishchess.org.uk/new-grading-administrator/>

Club/Association Insurance

Renewing your Club/Association Insurance from 1st October 2016? Click here — <http://www.englishchess.org.uk/club-association-insurance/>

CLUB FOCUS

Stroud Chess Club

This is the first of what is intended to be a series of articles aimed at assisting club organisers who are facing difficulties in keeping their clubs viable or are simply looking for ways to ensure it improves and thrives. Each article will feature a club that was able avert a slow decline or simple extinction by taking positive measures and it is hoped that some of the examples here will be useful to those facing similar problems. I would be very interested to hear from club organisers who might like to share the measures they have taken to avert disaster which we can then feature in future articles.

Chess clubs are the grass roots of over-the-board chess and their health or otherwise is indicative of the well-being of competitive chess at local and national level. The halcyon days of the early 70s to the early 90s now long behind us, we now find a situation where many clubs are losing membership and struggle on, amalgamate with similarly struggling or more successful clubs, or simply close down. To a greater or lesser extent this has been happening across the country and has a knock-on effect on leagues and congresses. Whilst the ECF strives to promote and lobby for chess at a national level and regional associations and leagues continue to do a good job organising inter-club competitions, it is often left to a few or even single individuals to keep those crucial local clubs going and, with little support or advice, the task is often too much.

One part of the rationale behind the “Chess Master @ the Local” initiative is to use ECF resources, limited though they are, to assist clubs and local areas to generate some publicity and interest in chess and lead to greater awareness of the potential of chess. It has already led to a regular social chess evening being set up in the venue where one of the events was held, forged positive relationship with venue owners and attracted the attention of a number of occasional players some of whom have expressed an interest in at least attending their local club, and even acting on that interest. But whatever the ECF does, it is still left pretty much to local players to decide the fate of their clubs and action is more often than not taken in ignorance of any examples that might be helpful. Hopefully these articles will help to fill that gap.



Stroud Chess Club (left, picture from Stroud News) recently collaborated with ECF to organise a very successful Chess Master @ The Local Event. A few years ago the club had a shrinking membership, one struggling team and no suitable permanent venue. Over the last 4 years this situation has been turned around and I'll leave it to Club Secretary, Adrian Walker, to explain how, with the help of Club Chairman, Duncan Dicks, and the support of many other club members, this was achieved.

“The club was historically very weak financially; subs (at £12 pa) had not kept up with the real world, but there was great resistance to increasing them. When the club had to move out of their premises about 6 years ago they could only afford rooms which came free above bars or restaurants. Here the expectation was that the players and their guests would buy drinks and food which would cover the “rent”. Some venues turned out to be too noisy, others were unstable to the extent that the room could be occupied by a paying event leaving players standing outside with sets and clocks while the visiting team milled around, waiting for a new arrangement. We were not important enough for venues to take us seriously.

The “A” team, of 5 players plus a couple of reserves, used the meeting room in an accounting firm for league matches, but the club effectively had no fixed venue for friendly games and the “B” team had been disbanded due to repeated defaults in league fixtures.

The club's assets, trophies, sets, boards and clocks, became dispersed, stored in people's lofts and sheds.

This was the situation which I discovered when I arrived in Stroud 4 years ago. Once the problems had become clear we found suitable premises which cost us £20 a week. Four of us who felt committed enough and could afford it agreed to contribute £20 per month to cover the rent. We had a fitted cupboard built by a local handyman and gathered together all the equipment and stored it on site. These premises included a kitchen and we made sure that we always had tea, coffee and biscuits to hand on club nights so that it became a more sociable space.

We put up flyers on local notice boards and commenced playing "café chess", whereby 3 or 4 of us would meet at lunchtime and play chess in popular cafes, thus generating interest; we also donated cheap travelling sets and left them in prominent places so that other patrons could play when we were not around. Slowly word spread and we had sufficient members to relaunch the B team. The Gloucestershire chess scene became aware of our renaissance and when a couple of Bristol players reached retirement age they moved into our area and joined our club. When we had enough juniors and beginners to make it viable, we launched a third team into the North Gloucestershire Chess League to join the now successful A and B teams.

About a year ago we were asked to leave the premises because the owners wanted to develop the space (a large meeting room) into offices. At first we were despondent but then approached a quirky and well known café, ideally located at the top of the High Street, which closed every day at 6pm. We arranged to hire the venue for a guaranteed 52 Tuesdays a year, and were given a reasonable rate in return for our business. The deal includes a barista who keeps us supplied with hot drinks. Since the numbers are now reasonable, the extra turnover for the café helps keep the rent down for us.

The Black Book Café has a clubby atmosphere, with book lined walls sofas and armchairs, as well as tables with conventional chairs, and has proved an ideal venue with a great atmosphere. We were also able to put up posters and flyers announcing our arrival. The extra visibility and prime location, including a massive, council run car park next to the venue which is free after 6pm, has helped us enormously, and we often have over 20 attendees on league match nights.

An important part of our success has been our ability to keep drop-in players and turn them into regular members; we do this by being friendly and welcoming, immediately setting new comers up with a partner, introducing ourselves by first name and chatting a bit, before having a friendly game (without a clock!). We also make sure that we get e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers and add the newcomers to distribution lists so that they feel part of the club from the start.

Finally, we have introduced a tiered fee structure, a la ECF, which ranges from £12 pa for casual chess, to £36 pa if one wants to include Winter League matches, raising to £60 for a package which includes the Summer League and internal competitions. Four of us still make up the difference, but the balance sheet is now sound and we actually broke even last year. With our success, and some more publicity, we hope to keep growing and eventually wean the club from the sponsor's generosity."

As you can see, a club that appeared to be on its last legs can, with the right interventions and the enthusiasm of a few be turned around to become a thriving concern. Of course, some of the measures taken at Stroud may not be applicable to other clubs and some may be unnecessary, but it is hoped that some of the ideas can be adapted to suit the local situation.

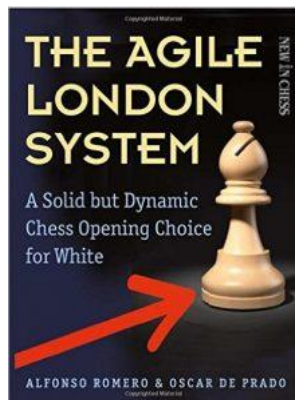
If this article was in any way useful, please feel free to share it with members of your club or, for that matter, chess colleagues in other clubs who may find it of benefit.

BOOK REVIEWS by IM Gary Lane



The Agile London System by Alfonso Holmes & Oscar De Prado Rodriguez

Published by New In Chess, paperback 335 pages £22.45



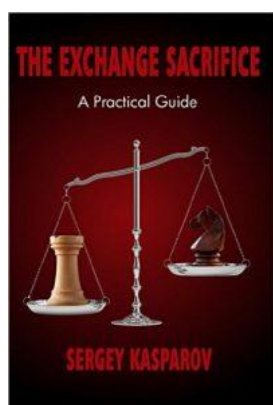
There was a time in Britain that whenever the London System was discussed someone would mention Michael Franklin who played it with success up and down the country at weekend tournaments. Naturally, it was also given a go at international level but never really became the latest fashion. In recent years this has changed dramatically with elite players looking for something new that has not been exhaustively analysed by computers. Magnus Carlsen has played 1 d4 d5 2 Bf4 in a number of rapid games, steadily embraced it for normal games, and even won with it at the recent Olympiad. The idea is that it is a solid line with potential for aggressive play which makes it an ideal opening for those who have limited time to study. The traditional London System usually involves an early Nf3 which is covered in detail but the authors demonstrate an understanding of the plight of

club players by offering lines against standard defences. Therefore, White is well prepared to take on the Grünfeld, King's Indian, Queen's Indian, Benoni, Dutch, Slav and various minor defences. The illustrated games demonstrate the ideas behind the opening, topped up by enough analysis to make it playable at the next open tournament.

A robust opening expertly explained.

The Exchange Sacrifice: A Practical Guide by Sergey Kasparov

Published by Russell Enterprises Inc, paperback 256 pages £17.99



I was once competing at the Paignton congress when a player on the board next to me declined a draw offer and promptly sacrificed the exchange for no obvious reason. After a handful of moves the defender crumbled and the leading junior triumphed. Later, it became apparent that in the post mortem that the sacrifice was intended to complicate the position with a few long term benefits, while the loser thought he was two points up and was mentally preparing his victory speech. This episode highlights the difficulties of knowing when to sacrifice the exchange but you can gain plenty of experience by following Sergey Kasparov's (no relation to Garry) helpful advice. The game scores are usually given without notes until it gets interesting when the plan to give up a rook for a piece rapidly becomes apparent.

The author provides plenty of insight and the examples are invaluable in learning how to handle such positions.

A positive guide on how to be technically good at chess.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The London Chess Classic

The London Chess Classic returns to Olympia from Friday 9th – Sunday 18th December. Eight of the world's top ten players, including two former world champions, will be taking part as this year's Grand Chess Tour reaches its climax. Daily and season tickets are now available online – book early to avoid disappointment!

There will also be the usual chess festival for players of all ages and abilities, with an over £45,000 prize fund. Events include a nine-round FIDE Open and the Super Rapidplay Open. Women and under-25s enter free of charge (UK residents only). Full details and online entry now available – enter before Monday 17th October for the best discounts.

Bury St Edmunds Chess Congress – 22nd/23rd October

You may already have plans to include a mention since it's in the ECF events list, but a shout out for the Bury St Edmunds Chess Congress would be great. Everything you anyone needs to know is online at www.bsecongress.org.uk

First Thursday Hendon Blitz

Open section – 10 minutes each — www.hendonchessclub.com/blitz

Golders Green Monthly Rapidplay

Open, U170, U145, U120 – 25 minutes + 5 seconds a move – www.goldersgreenchess.blogspot.co.uk

Visit the ECF online calendar here - <http://www.englishchess.org.uk/event-calendar/>



Many members are already saving money on their car insurance - register your vehicle to receive a competitive quote before your renewal date. Tradewise64 are also a major sponsor of Hastings Chess, providing assistance to female and young, aspiring players ... <https://www.tradewise64.com/>

- Mike Truran, Tradewise64 Relationship Manager