

Director of Junior Chess: Election Address

Chess CV

- ECF Director of Home Chess (2013 - 2018)
- 4NCL Board member (2011 -)
- International Arbiter (2012 -), acting as an arbiter at events such as: 4NCL (2013 -), London Chess Classic (2011 -), Olympiad (2016, 2018), World Youth Championships (2014)
- Coach at several schools in and around the West Midlands (2011 -)
- Warwickshire CA Junior Secretary (2010 – 2012, 2016 -)
- UK Chess Challenge Gigafinal & Terafinal Chief Arbiter (2017 -)
- EPSCA Council Member (2017 -)

Intentions for 2018-21

Having spent five years as ECF Director of Home Chess, I am excited at the possibility of remaining involved with the ECF in another Directorship, in an area in which I have had an increasing interest over the last couple of years.

Developing local junior activity

I took on the role of Junior Secretary for the Warwickshire Chess Association in 2016, working with coaches and junior clubs in the area. Before then, Warwickshire had no junior activity at all worth speaking of at a county level – we did not field any teams in inter-county tournaments, and only really organised a county Megafinal. After speaking with officials in counties that have been traditionally successful over a long period of time, I put some of the resulting ideas into practice in Warwickshire. This involved working with local coaches in schools and local junior clubs, and within two years Warwickshire has come from nothing, to finish in 2nd in the EPSCA Under 9 Championship and 6th in the EPSCA Under 11 Championship, had two players represent their country internationally, and had a British Champion and British Girls Champion. Based on my own experiences and working together with other successful counties, I would be keen to provide guidance to other counties that may want to initiate or improve their own junior programmes, so that methods considered best practice can be replicated across England, rather than just in part of it.

Working with other junior organisations

A number of organisations organise different junior chess tournaments in England. While all of these tournaments provide juniors with opportunities, there are often calendar clashes between them, and there is often confusion as to what the “England” team is. I think it is important that there is a discussion between all of the different junior organisations to agree which of them is doing what, and have a combined plan as to how we will work together in the interests of junior chess in England.

Selection Policy

I will liaise with coaches, parents and other interested parties on the way forward with regards to how selection for England junior teams should work. At the moment, the majority of qualification tournaments are in the South of England, and I am particularly interested in finding ways to give players from all parts of England opportunities to be selected without having to travel repeatedly for tournaments that are a long distance from where they live.

Coaches

When working as ECF Director of Home Chess, I created an arbiter training system that enabled people to take arbiter training courses and become qualified arbiters, with the result that there are now more people qualifying as arbiters, rather than running tournaments without any formal qualification. I will liaise with existing coaches and other interested parties to investigate ways of introducing a similar system for the training of coaches.

Alex Holowczak

6th September, 2018