



ChessTech2020

The [ChessTech2020](#) Conference was held online on 5th and 6th December 2020. Its name represented the theme of chess and technology and was the 8th annual London Chess Conference. Moving the conference online was a forced innovation which turned out positively. There were 526 registrants which is quadruple what might be expected had the event been held at a London venue. A truly international event, there were attendees from 70 countries with segments in Spanish, French and German.

The event was organised by [ChessPlus Ltd](#), the London-based chess education and conference company, under the direction of John Foley. The programme director was Stefan Löffler of [ChessTech News](#), a free newsletter devoted to developments in chess and technology. FIDE was a core sponsor of the event through their continental funding of the European Chess Union. Commercial sponsors of the event included Tornelo, Chessable, DGT, LearningChess, ChessKid, ChessLang, SzuperChess, GameAhead Consulting and ChessStars. Following the conference there were certified training courses on chess and psychology and chess and mathematics.

The conference ran parallel to the FIDE Congress which was also held online. Following a welcome to the two-day-meeting from Zurab Azmaiparashvili, President of ECU, the FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich gave a keynote address [Chess: Driving Technological Innovations in the 21st Century](#) and answered a wide range of questions afterwards.

The Zoom-based conference comprised 44 sessions comprising lectures and panels with 122 contributors. Attendees were able to interact between sessions in the Chess Café, an online meeting place, where users were able to discuss a range of topics and choose with whom to interact. The conference was very well received with an average satisfaction star rating of 4.3/5. According to the post-conference survey, the three most frequent descriptions of the conference were “interesting”, “informative” and “inspiring”.

There were many memorable contributors from the British Isles

- The ECF Book of the Year Award was presented to **David Smerdon** for The Complete Chess Swindler. **Sean Marsh**, the master of ceremonies, introduced **Ray Edwards** to make the commendations and **Lady Hale** to make the formal presentation.
- **Daniel King**'s insightful account of how he built up his YouTube channel PowerPlayChess attracted many admirers.
- **Sarah Longson** from UKCC gave an professional account of how she switched from the physical to the online environment.

- **John Ashworth** from Caplin Systems gave an excellent account of the advantages of chess sponsorship
- There was a competition for chess startup companies in which **Andrew Varney** and **Andrew Webb** were praised for their Acorn Chess classroom tool. The winner was Chessvision.ai by **Pawel Kacprzak** from Poland.
- **Shohreh Bayat** and **Judit Sztaray** gave a comprehensive talk on online arbitration which was praised by the arbiter community.
- **Vince Negri** hosted no fewer than three sessions related to different aspects of cheating – the hottest topic of the conference.
- **Rita Atkins** spoke about mathematical games on the chessboard.
- **Barry Hymer** gave a talk about using chess data for science.
- **Ljubica Lazarevic** explained how to stream chess games on Twitch.
- **Alice O’Gorman** hosted the session on chess for girls and women.
- **Sean Marsh** explained how he retrained CSC chess tutors to deliver chess in schools.

There were important announcements too. **Dmitri Schneider** and **David Beaton** from Chessable presented Developments in Chess Learning Technology where they announced the Chessable Classroom, a tool for which they have high ambitions. **Chris Callahan** from Lichess gave a very popular walk through of the new features of Lichess.

For those who did not attend the conference, most of the sessions are available via the conference [website](#). Many are free and others require payment. People who paid for a professional ticket for the conference got access to all the videos.

The success of the conference depended on a team of people making sure everything was working smoothly. These included **John Upham**, audiovisual manager; **Brigitta Peszleg**, event co-ordinator; **Sean Marsh**, session facilitator; **John Yip**, website; **Leila Raivio**, finance; **Anuuari Sainbayar**, networking; **Etienne Mensch** (French segment); **Pep Suarez** (Spanish segment); **Conrad Schormann** (German segment); **Macauley Peterson** (host); **Eric van Reem** (host); **Alessandro Dominici** (host); **Konrad Urban** (networking software).

We plan to run ChessTech2021 to build upon the foundation of ChessTech2020. It will be an important contribution to the widespread distribution of chess technology for playing, teaching and learning around the world.

John Foley

10 Jan 2021

