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April 2020 ECF Newsletter

Stay Safe - Play Chess at Home

CONTENTS

- [1 - Play Chess at Home: an update from the ECF](#)
- [2 - 4NCL Online: All the action from Round 1](#)
- [3 - ECF Online Events](#)
- [4 - Join the Club: Where to find your local online chess club](#)
- [5 - ECF Online Ratings & OTB Monthly Grading](#)
- [6 - Inside the Chess Bunker: Interview with chess journalist Leon Watson](#)
- [7 - Tune In, Check Out: Chess podcasts you might like](#)
- [8 - Chess on YouTube: 8 highly recommended channels](#)
- [9 - We'll Meet Again: What you need to know about postponed events](#)
- [10 - Magnus Carlsen Invitational: \\$250,000 online rapidplay starts April 18](#)
- [11 - In Czech: England's teams at the World Senior Championships in Prague](#)
- [12 - School's Out, But Not Chess: CSC online resources for students & tutors](#)
- [13 - Delancey UK Chess Challenge](#)
- [14 - ECF Academy Goes Online](#)
- [15 - ECF Finance Council update](#)
- [16 - FIDE Veterans Award for Gerry Walsh](#)
- [17 - Chess Magazine: April 2020](#)
- [18 - 'Checkmate Covid-19' Red Cross Fundraiser](#)
- [19 - 'The Chess Pit' Quiz: 10 brainteasers from the UK's new chess podcast](#)

1 - Play Chess at Home: An update from the ECF

Dear chess friends,

Welcome to this unusual April 2020 edition of the ECF Newsletter. Due to the Coronavirus crisis, these are tragic and difficult times, and as we're all in lockdown, the ECF Newsletter (like the chess world) is going to be a little different this time.

This e-newsletter would normally have been prepared by Mark Rivlin, who has been unwell but is now well on the road to recovery.

I have been asked to step in as guest editor for the month in Mark's absence, and we offer him all our best wishes and look forward to him taking up the reins again in May.

The ECF Office is currently on furlough due to the lockdown, but queries sent to office@englishchess.org.uk will be answered by the relevant ECF director.

Despite the lack of over-the-board events, there's lots going on in the chess world, as everything from major global tournaments, the 4NCL and your local chess club migrate online.

To help you navigate these challenging times, we aim in this issue to showcase all that new online chess activity and point you in the right direction to find it.

In English chess, the ECF members clubs are now well established with six ECF online-rated tournaments per week for ECF members and supporters on [chess.com](https://www.chess.com) and lichess.org.

<https://englishchessonline.org.uk/>

<https://www.chess.com/club/english-chess-federation-members>

<https://lichess.org/team/english-chess-players>

We also run regular members club internationals on both platforms. You can find all the details at the above links and we encourage everyone to join and get an ECF online rating from club events alongside and separate from your OTB rating.

The [4NCL](#) has been leading the way for OTB events moving online, with an impressive 172 teams taking part in its first round on April 7. There's also a **Junior 4NCL Online**, with 118 teams, starting on Thursday April 16.

Online chess clubs have also sprung up (almost overnight) across the country, with scores of clubs now holding regular tournaments, matches and club nights via such popular playing sites as lichess.org and [chess.com](https://www.chess.com).

As over-the-board chess is all currently postponed or cancelled until further notice, there's never been a better time to play chess at home. Whether you're a seasoned online player or just dipping your toes into internet chess for the first time, there's something for everyone.

(While some online-savvy chess fans play blitz, bullet and even various chess variants online on chess.com, lichess.org and chess24.com, other, more traditional players say they are simply playing chess by Skype video call and moving the pieces on their wooden board at each end. Whatever your preference, the main thing is to do what you enjoy).

I hope the following bite-size nuggets of information, articles, website links and chess quiz questions will keep you engaged until we meet each other (virtually) next month. Until then, stay safe and play chess at home!

Yours sincerely,

Tim Wall

2 - 4NCL Online: All the action from Round 1

The [4NCL](#) has stepped into the breach by organising a massive online league competition, **4NCL Online**, running from April until the end of June. A total of 172 teams took part in 5 Divisions on Tuesday April 7, and the following rounds take place at 7:30pm every Tuesday until June 30 on [lichess.org](#)

The [Round 1 results](#) saw great giant-killing exploits worthy of an FA Cup tie, with Surbiton 1 beating the mighty Irish team Gonzaga 2.5-1.5, including a win by 17-year-old Koby Kalavannan over French GM Sebastian Maze on board 1. Another GM having a tough time was John Emms (Chessable White Rose), who lost to 14-year-old Aaravamudhan Balaji (Kent KJCA Kestrels A), even though the Yorkshire team triumphed 3-1.

Other titled players are also getting involved behind the scenes, with GM David Howell gallantly taking on the manager role for the junior team Battersea Howitzers.

The 4NCL is providing links to each player's lichess.org profile, and from there games can be viewed live by clicking on the TV icon during the game, while pgn's of each round can be [viewed here](#).

The Junior 4NCL kicks off next week, also on lichess.org, with Round 1 on Thursday 16th April at 6:00pm. A grand total of 118 teams of 4 players will play two games each against the same opponent (one with black and one with white), with 15 minutes plus 1 second on the clock. Details of the Junior 4NCL format and pairings will be published shortly on the 4NCL website.

3 - ECF Online Events

Nigel Towers writes: In addition to the regular ECF members club tournaments on chess.com and lichess.org, the ECF will be running an English Blitz Championship on chess.com with the Group Stage starting in April and a 16-player final in May for the title of English Online Blitz Champion.

The ECF is also looking at an Online Counties Championship and a return of the National Club Championships.

4 - Join the Club: Where to find your local online chess club

Many ECF-affiliated OTB chess clubs have now set up online teams at [lichess.org](#) and clubs at [chess.com](#), where you can play online tournaments, matches and other events – all free of charge. On chess.com, you can find your club via: <https://www.chess.com/clubs/find>, while on lichess.org go to: <https://lichess.org/team/all> and search for your club there.

If your club does not already have an online club or team, you can set one up by following the instructions at: <https://lichess.org/team/new> or <https://www.chess.com/club/create>

Both websites also have instructions on how to create tournaments and matches for your club or team. The ECF is now maintaining a directory of Online English clubs – please take a look at the online club finder [here](#):

If you're moving your club online or know of an online club not on the list, please let us know by emailing: office@englishchess.org.uk so that we can keep the list up to date.

5 - ECF Online Ratings & OTB Monthly Grading

Nigel Towers writes: [ECF online](#) club games are now being rated with the March list published last month and the second (April) monthly list due out shortly [here](#):

Separate lists are being produced for online rapid and blitz games in registered events. And all online ratings are completely separate from the OTB grades and won't impact these.

4NCL games will be ECF online-rated and the results from April should be reflected in the standard-play online list in May.

Please contact the ECF if you would like to register your event and submit results for online rating.

Brian Valentine reports: There is good progress with the phase 1 over-the-board Monthly Grading system, which is expected to be ready for initial testing with graders within the next four weeks. We have a team of volunteers helping with the work to get us this far and would like to ask for additional front-end developers with MySQL and/or PHP skills to join the team.

6 - Inside the Chess Bunker: Interview with chess journalist Leon Watson

The ECF Newsletter interviewed chess journalist and Battersea Chess club member Leon Watson about his top tips for surviving the coronavirus lockdown, including how to play blitz chess, change nappies and watch Netflix all at the same time.

What does your Twitter profile say about you (and is it true)? It says I'm a proud dad, a journalist and a chess player. The last bit might be an exaggeration though...

Where are you currently in lockdown? Deep in south London. Nothing has changed much here - we're always in lockdown due to the high crime rate.

Home life (is there any other??) Watching Netflix, changing newborn nappies and playing the odd blitz game - usually all at the same time. Occasional garden cricket too.

What's your occupation, and how has it changed in the time of coronavirus? I work for the Play Magnus group which owns chessable.com and chess24. Right now, I'm busy trying to promote The Magnus Carlsen Invitational, an event which will be the richest online event ever. Look out for it!

What new life/chess skill are you learning during the lockdown? I'm nailing the [100 Endgames You Must Know](#) course on [Chessable](#). I'm on No. 48 right now. By the end of this, I'll be far more confident in the endgame.

Which chess club do you belong to - and what is it doing online now? I'm the secretary of Battersea Chess Club and we're trying to turn this situation into an opportunity. It's not easy - who knows what will happen when it ends - but in the meantime we're getting everyone in the club, young and old, into online chess and holding as many events as we can. So, for example, we recently held an online simul with GM Simon Williams, we have a match lined up against Romagna Chess Club in Italy, a 30-board online derby match against Hammersmith we're calling 'El Chessico' on April 14, and we're also holding tournaments three times a week.

Favourite TV series to binge-watch? Currently 'Better Call Saul' and Season 3 of 'Ozark' - both are brilliant. But 'The Wire' and 'The Sopranos' are my all-time favourites.

What's the worst thing about not being able to play over-the-board chess? Not getting the feeling of enjoyment that comes with winning.

And the best thing? Not getting the feeling of utter devastation that comes with losing. Chess is cruel.

With all other sports cancelled, is chess the new sexy? I'm trying to make it so! If chess doesn't take this opportunity when there's no other competition, it never will. So, all hands on deck - let's make it happen!

Fantasy lockdown: Which chess player from history would you choose to be in social isolation with, and why? I bet Paul Morphy was a hell-raiser, it would have to be him.

Who is your favourite chess streamer? It's a dead heat between [GM Simon Williams](#) and the Chessable co-founder [IM John Bartholomew](#). Both are just great communicators.

What's the most embarrassing thing that happened while you were playing chess online? Ha! Well I'm not sure if anything embarrassing has happened online. In an OTB game I got up once and immediately fell flat on my face.

What is your favourite chess-related app, podcast or other online chess gadget? I work for Chessable because I believe in it. I've learnt so much using it, and I just enjoy using it. Has to be Chessable.

How do you think chess organisations should adapt to the current situation? It's a difficult situation and we need to adapt. Constant communication is key, making people who may be stuck at home on their own feel like part of an active community, despite what is happening in the world. Chess can be the escapism and the warm blanket everyone needs right now. If chess clubs, the ECF, even FIDE can do that then we will emerge stronger.

What piece of advice would you have for ECF members trying to stay safe and play chess at home? Watch [The Magnus Carlsen Invitational](#) on chess24 – it's going to be massive!

7 - Tune in, check out: Podcasts you might like

An irreverent new London-based podcast, [The Chess Pit](#), in which Football Today podcaster and newbie chess enthusiast Jon Mackenzie joins forces with chess coaches Phil Makepeace and Chris Russell, is a very accessible weekly mix of chess news, whimsy and banter – aimed equally at casual and competitive players. Typical episode titles are 'Mountain Goats Just Run Wild,' 'The Wingside and the Bingside' and 'Everything Sounds like the Triwizard Tournament.' The podcast is sponsored by [Playfair Capital](#), a London venture capital firm.

If 'The Chess Pit' is Banter Blitz meets Ricky Gervais podcast, another great weekly listen, [The Perpetual Chess Podcast](#), is more in the John Humphreys Radio 4 interview mould. Each week, the highly engaging American chess teacher Ben Johnson interviews leading GMs, coaches, organisers and authors about their life and work, and teases recommendations out of them for how to improve at chess.

8 - Chess on YouTube: 8 highly recommended channels

[Chess24](#) – Lively and entertaining commentary on leading chess tournaments, plus banter blitz with such stars as Magnus Carlsen, Jan Gustafsson, Peter Svidler and England's Lawrence Trent.

[Chess.com](#) – More excellent commentary from the US-based playing website, plus a wide range of instructional videos for all playing strengths. Includes commentary and teaching from the Ginger GM himself, Simon Williams.

[St. Louis Chess Club](#) – Studio-based commentary from GMs Yasser Seirawan and Maurice Ashley and WGM Jennifer Shahade. Also includes highly instructional classroom lectures from a range of leading chess teachers.

[Power Play Chess](#) (GM Daniel King) – If you only have 15 minutes a day to study chess, this is a great learning resource. Daniel King focuses on analysing the best games from leading tournaments and players in an easy-to-understand way.

[GingerGM](#) (GM Simon Williams) – Highly entertaining (and instructional) videos and live streaming of banter blitz games from the Surrey-based GM, who has garnered an enthusiastic following worldwide with his combination of dashing attacking play and devil-may-care sense of fun. There aren't many chess players as well known as Magnus Carlsen, but particularly among younger players, Simon is the fans' favourite.

[Game Changer](#) (GM Matthew Sadler & WIM Natasha Regan) – Brilliant analysis by Sadler and Regan of the games of AlphaZero and other neural network programs, showing how human play can be improved by following the AI machines' recommendations.

[IM Andrew Martin](#) – Classic instructional videos by the highly respected FIDE Senior Trainer, showing how to use positional and tactical ideas in your own games.

[Kingscrusher](#) (Tryfon Gavriel) – The London-based player and chess teacher has built up a loyal following, with over 100,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel. Like Sadler & Regan, Gavriel enjoys showing model attacking games by AI computer programs.

9 - We'll Meet Again: What you need to know about postponed events

As public gatherings have been banned under official Coronavirus restrictions, all over-the-board chess events scheduled for the next few months have been either postponed or cancelled for 2020.

Among the biggest events called off are The British Championships, due to take place in Torquay in July, which has now been cancelled for 2020, and the FIDE Olympiad, scheduled for Moscow in August, now postponed.

For a full guide to all English chess events either postponed or cancelled, see the [ECF Calendar](#).

The ECF is also looking to put online events on the calendar, so please do email your events to office@englishchess.org.uk if you would like these to be included.

10 - Magnus Carlsen Invitational: \$250,000 online rapidplay starts April 18

Magnus Carlsen may be isolating at home – but he's not hiding from the challenge posed by the Coronavirus crisis. As well as putting his reputation on the line in dramatic banter blitz matches, through his company Play Magnus the champ is also putting up \$250,000 in prize money for a 2-week Rapidplay tournament against 7 of his closest rivals.

The [Magnus Carlsen Invitational](#) from April 18-May 2 is expected to include several of the players in the just-postponed FIDE Candidates tournament – and will also feature players' commentary and the chance for Chess24 premium users to play participants in blitz games.

In a statement, Carlsen made it clear he was staging the tournament to show that the Coronavirus crisis will not prevent chess being played safely from home.

He said: 'This is a historic moment for chess, and given that it's possible to continue top professional play in an online environment, we have not only the opportunity but the responsibility to players and fans around the world who need a distraction when no other live, competitive sport is being played.'

For full info about how to follow the tournament and watch the live commentary, go to chess24.com.

11 - In Czech: England's teams at the World Senior Championships in Prague

GM Glenn Flear (5.5/7) led the England Over 50 Senior open team to 4th place with 10/14 in the World Senior Teams Championships in Prague last month. The England teams in the Over 50 open, Over 65 open and Women's Over 50 events all had to return home abruptly after Round 7 (out of a scheduled 9 rounds), when the Czech government ordered a halt due to Coronavirus fears. All England players were able to return home safely.

[Reports from Glenn Flear and Stewart Reuben here](#)

12 - School's Out, But Not Chess: CSC online resources for students & tutors

The UK's biggest chess educational charity, [Chess in Schools and Communities](#), is adapting to the Coronavirus lockdown by offering a range of teaching online resources to school students, their parents and school chess tutors. These are scheduled to include:

- Comprehensive chess worksheets that children can use with parents at home - YouTube videos to accompany the worksheets - Kahoot quizzes for children to try at home For more information, go to: <https://www.chessinschools.co.uk/chess-at-home>

13 - Delancey UK Chess Challenge

The [Delancey UK Schools Chess Challenge](#) is organising daily online school chess tournaments, simulms against titled players and various other online events. More details available [here](#).

The annual UKCC MegaFinals have been postponed until (at the earliest) September and GigaFinals until October, respectively. Online qualifying tournaments may be organised in the summer, UKCC's Alex Longson reports.

Sign up for updates about rescheduled UK Chess Challenge events [here](#).

14 - ECF Academy goes online

The May 2020 ECF Academy training weekend will now be held online. Academy director Alex Longson said: "We are currently reviewing with parents and coaches what the best approach is, but we're excited to be trying out something new. We'll also be running some exclusive training tournaments and activities online."

For more information, students should email: academy@englishchess.org.uk

15 - ECF Finance Council update

This year's Finance Council meeting, scheduled to be held on April 25 in London, has been cancelled. Further information will be sent to Council delegates shortly.

16 - FIDE Veterans Award for Gerry Walsh

The former President of the English Chess Federation, Gerry Walsh, has been named as one of 17 honoured recipients of FIDE's Veterans Awards for 2020. The awards, recently increased to a total of 35,000 euros in view of the Coronavirus crisis, are granted to distinguished players, coaches and organisers for their sterling services to chess over the years. Gerry, a leading arbiter and one of the foremost tournament organisers from the North of England, is best known for staging an impressive series of international events in Teesside in the 1970s, and for being the long-time organiser of the popular Scarborough weekend congress.

FIDE's announcement can be viewed [here](#).

17 - Chess Magazine: April 2020

The [April 2020 taster is here](#) for download. If you like this and would like to read more, the full issue is available to purchase [here](#).



18 - 'Checkmate Covid-19' Red Cross Fundraiser

Danny Rosenbaum writes: The ECF and the British Red Cross are organising a 24-hour online chess marathon fundraiser, *Checkmate Covid-19*. All proceeds go to fund the British Red Cross's work helping health workers, the elderly, and the vulnerable in the face of the pandemic. The event takes place in May on chess.com, who are also making a generous donation.

For more information on how to support the marathon, email: socialmedia@englishchess.org.uk

18 - 'The Chess Pit' Quiz

Test your knowledge against podcaster and chess coach Phil Makepeace, who set the following chess trivia questions on episodes of '[The Chess Pit](#)' podcast. Answers can be found [on the ECF website](#).

1. Which country has the highest number of grandmasters per million people a) inside the Eurovision Song Contest area; and b) outside it?
2. Which Wimbledon Chess Club member is the Guardian's chief sports correspondent (and was 'voted the hardest man in Luton' on his Wikipedia page)?
3. Who was the youngest player to beat a grandmaster, and at what age?

4. Who was the last South American player to play in the Candidates, and when?
5. Which piece of military equipment does the rook take its name from?
6. Who became FIDE World Champion when ranked No. 44 in the world?
7. How does the Kraken, a fairy chess piece, move on the chessboard?
8. Which British government minister's title is derived from chess?
9. Who is the strongest player since World War II whose surname starts with the letter Y (based on world rankings at the time)?
10. Which Merseyside rock band released a single called 'Bad losers on Yahoo! Chess'?

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of the ECF Newsletter. Please contact us with news, information, feedback and suggestions for future editions to: office@englishchess.org.uk



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