

English Chess Federation

April 2021

The Interview **Shohreh Bayat**

INSIDE

Home Chess News – Nigel Towers

Chess for All – the upcoming ECF chess festival in May

Inclusivity in Chess – Mark Jordan

ECF Writing Initiative – Mark Rivlin

plus Problem Corner, book reviews and much more ...



Welcome to the April edition of the ECF newsletter, and I hope you had a good Easter break. In this edition we feature an interview with Shohreh Bayat, International Arbiter and newly appointed ECF Director of Events. We also have an article from Mark Jordan about diversity in chess.

We'd like to thank members for their continued support in these difficult times. At March 1st 2020 the ECF had 10512 paying members. At the same date in 2021 there were 6756. This represents a 64.2% retention rate which shows the excellent support that members are giving to the Federation.

There is also news from Director of Home Chess Nigel Towers about a return to over-the-board chess.

We are pleased to announce the launch of The ECF Chess Writing Initiative. There are more details below, and we hope this will attract a lot of interest.

Stay safe

Mark Rivlin



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The Interview

Mark Rivlin meets Shohreh Bayat



Shohreh Bayat is an Iranian chess arbiter and holds the WFM title. An International FIDE Arbiter, she was chief arbiter of the Women's World Chess Championship 2020. Shohreh claimed asylum in the UK in February 2020 and is now an arbiter under the auspices of the ECF. She received the International Women of Courage Award in 2021.

Tell us about your chess background in Iran, becoming a WFM before becoming an International Arbiter.

My father taught me how to play chess when I was nine years old and I took an immediate interest in the game. Chess is extremely beautiful and deep and there is always room for learning. It also requires logic and critical thinking, that is why the game fascinates me. I have played chess professionally for years and got my WFM title based on rating. I also won numerous Iranian tournaments in women's and junior chess championships and played for the Iran national team in youth, junior and adult levels.

You recently received the International Women of Courage Award. How did this award rank in your achievements?

I am indeed thrilled and honoured, it was a nice surprise, however, part of me knew that there are many women who are more courageous than me, so I decided to receive this Award as the representative of all courageous Iranian women who are labouring under the yoke of religious bigotry and oppression.

How are you adapting to life in the UK?

I had an extremely difficult year as an asylum seeker and I am grateful to the people who helped me to cope during this time. Now, I am a refugee, and things are improving quickly for me. I love Britain because it is my new home, a society with a rich culture and long illustrious history. I am happy and honoured to live in the UK and represent this wonderful country.

You have the title of WFM and a current grading of 2091. If you have the time, would you consider playing in UK Leagues or tournaments?

I have already played in the 2020 OTB London Chess league for Cavendish and in the 4NCL for CSC and I quite enjoyed it. Right now, I am playing for Cavendish again in the Online London League. I also played in the 2020 ECF Women's Blitz Chess Championship and finished second.

You are the first A-Grade arbiter from Asia, and you were the Chief Arbiter of the Women's World Championship in 2020. What are your ambitions in your role as an arbiter?

I hope to get the chance to be Arbiter in the World Chess Championship Match in the Open section. As the councillor of the FIDE Arbiters' commission, I enjoy educational activities. I am leader of the FIDE Arbiters' Manual and we also organise refresher courses for International Arbiters and FIDE lecturers. Our next step is to educate Arbiters from around the world about online chess.

You have recently been appointed to the newly-created post of Events Director for the ECF. What are your main priorities in the role?

Right now, our first priority is to go back to OTB chess as soon as possible. I hope to use my experience of tournaments around the world to improve ECF events.

What are the key skills and expertise required to make a good arbiter?

Titles are a useful form of recognition, but they don't make you a good arbiter. It is about passion. It is a sobering responsibility, you have to know the rules and regulations and how to apply them, how to deal with players, how to maintain control and the ability to manage events.

I love the academic exercise of debating aspects of the Laws of Chess. In my free time I still study these things with arbiters around the world. Sometimes we argue for days about one sentence in the Laws!

Are we making progress in preventing cheating in over-the-board and online chess?

We are improving by using devices like metal detectors/ x-ray machines, scanners and electronic jamming, and thanks to Dr Ken Regan, Arbiters now have statistical evidence to challenge players who we believe are violating Fair Play regulations.

Arbiters also prevent cheating by technical supervision of games. In some online events we use video communication apps such as Zoom to monitor players and their computer screens. FIDE has also introduced new anti-cheating laws for online chess which have proved to be successful.

Aside from your work in chess you also hold a Masters degree in natural resources engineering. Are you also working in that area?

I have worked on the use of technology like satellite images on the estimation of forest biodiversity and have published articles in scientific journals. But now I am solely involved in chess events.

Who have been the most influential people in your chess career?

Nigel Short has been the most influential person in my chess career. When I was 11 years old, my coach told me about Nigel and we studied some of his games together. I first met him in New Delhi when he visited a junior tournament in which I was playing. He came to Iran several times, working as the national coach for one year, and did much to promote chess in my country. In my experience, he has always been very supportive of women's chess, in contrast to the very unfair reputation which some people seek to pin on him. Nigel also helped me greatly when the hijab crisis unexpectedly broke in January 2020, providing me with support, advice and practical help.

What are your interests outside of chess?

I broaden my horizons by traveling, and getting to know other cultures, finding new friends and trying different cuisine. I like reading historical Persian poems. I also like American television series, my favourite one is *Breaking Bad* and I really enjoyed *The Queen's Gambit*.



Director of Home Chess **Nigel Towers'** monthly column features updates on the British Online Championships II, a roundup of the other online leagues and tournaments, and plans for over-the-board events including the English Counties 2021 and the October British Championships 2021 ...

ECF Online

ECF online club memberships continue to increase on Chess.com and Lichess with the latest events schedule available at the usual link as below -

<https://englishchessonline.org.uk/upcoming-club-events/>

ECF Members club tournaments are all ECF online rated along with registered league, club and congress events including 25 or so local leagues as you can see from the Events list for March online rating. These are increasingly popular and you may want to check out some of the leagues which present a great opportunity to play against local players online in team events at a range of time controls.

<https://englishchessonline.org.uk/ecf-online-ratings-march-2021/events-during-february-rated-in-the-march-list/>

Nations League

The Chess.com Nations League Season II has now completed with the England team finishing a creditable 6th in the highly competitive top division including a draw against third-place USA.

Nations League Final Standings

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rd 1</i>	<i>Rd 2</i>	<i>Rd 3</i>	<i>Rd 4</i>	<i>Rd 5</i>	<i>Rd 6</i>	<i>Rd 7</i>	<i>Total</i>
1	Romania	W6	W2	W4	W8	W3	W7	W5	7.0
2	Poland	W3	L1	D5	W6	W4	W8	W7	5.5

3	United States	L2	W7	D6	W5	L1	W9	W10	4.5
4	Canada	W7	W11	L1	W9	L2	L5	W6	4.0
5	Uruguay	W12	D9	D2	L3	W8	W4	L1	4.0
6	England	L1	B---	D3	L2	W10	W11	L4	3.5
7	Argentina	L4	L3	B---	W11	W9	L1	L2	3.0
8	Saudi Arabia	D11	W10	D9	L1	L5	L2	B---	3.0
9	Jamaica	W10	D5	D8	L4	L7	L3	D11	2.5
10	Cape Verde	L9	L8	D11	W12	L6	B---	L3	2.5
11	Greece	D8	L4	D10	L7	W12	L6	D9	2.5
12	Pakistan	L5	U---	U---	L10	L11	U---	U---	0.0



Saturday Masters - The ECF English Players team is also taking part in the regular Lichess.org Saturday Masters events at 4-00 pm on Saturday afternoons.

These are team battles at 3|0 blitz time control with 30 or more national teams, open to all ECF members/ supporters and running for 90 minutes. We regularly finish in the top places and GMs Matthew Sadler and Keith Arkell led the way last Saturday, 3rd April, with the England team finishing sixth in the strongest field to date. Please see below for the results from last Saturday and team leader board as at April 7.

2021 Saturday Masters Team Battle			English Chess Players		
1	ESPANA CHESS CLUB - PH INTERNATIONAL	austrianattack 51 + 43 + 41 + 40 + 34 + 34 + 33 + 33 + 31 + 31	371	Players	42
2	Chess Viña	FM fireanigrl 93 + 63 + 60 + 48 + 22 + 21 + 20 + 18 + 17 + 8	370	Average rating	2036
3	قلبي الافلاک	vnak9 51 + 45 + 40 + 35 + 35 + 33 + 31 + 29 + 29 + 28	356	Average performance	1978
4	ILOILO FRIENDLY CHESS	ivana1234 47 + 40 + 38 + 33 + 33 + 31 + 31 + 30 + 30 + 29	342	Average score	16
5	Guillon chess	IM Alexr58 43 + 41 + 38 + 36 + 34 + 34 + 28 + 28 + 25 + 24	331	Team page	
6	English Chess Players	GM gmmms2694 50 + 40 + 31 + 31 + 30 + 29 + 27 + 26 + 24 + 23	311	1	GM gmmms2694 2615 50
7	🏆🏆🏆 Dimitar & Friends 🏆🏆🏆	Alex_Lidsky 40 + 36 + 34 + 33 + 31 + 31 + 26 + 25 + 24 + 22	302	2	GM Atomrod 2497 40
8	SK 1962 Ladenburg e.V.	FC_Rostov 58 + 44 + 42 + 32 + 31 + 28 + 24 + 16 + 13 + 10	298	3	deenan2008 2402 31
9	VIT United	IM swimmerchess 70 + 44 + 26 + 26 + 24 + 23 + 23 + 22 + 18 + 16	292	4	MartinBurrows 2223 31
10	Team Zaporizhzhia Region Збірна Запорізької області	ljuks 50 + 42 + 30 + 30 + 23 + 23 + 21 + 21 + 17 + 15	272	5	Woodpusher1971 2354 30
				6	natpaul 2162 29
				7	Dagdatheclt 2062 27
				8	NM fakenews1-0 2372 26
				9	MouseSlip64 2228 24
				10	vleeshhd 2110 23
				11	iamletmethink 2240 21
				12	boardinflame 2116 19
				13	Demyan7777 1979 18
				14	khswampy 1974 18
				15	DriftyPencil 1956 18
				16	nazriz 2222 17
				17	DavidWilson1980 2190 17
				18	WSCC6C11 1408 17
				19	mike-bear 1933 15
				20	nigelst 1926 15
				21	smartcraft 1829 13

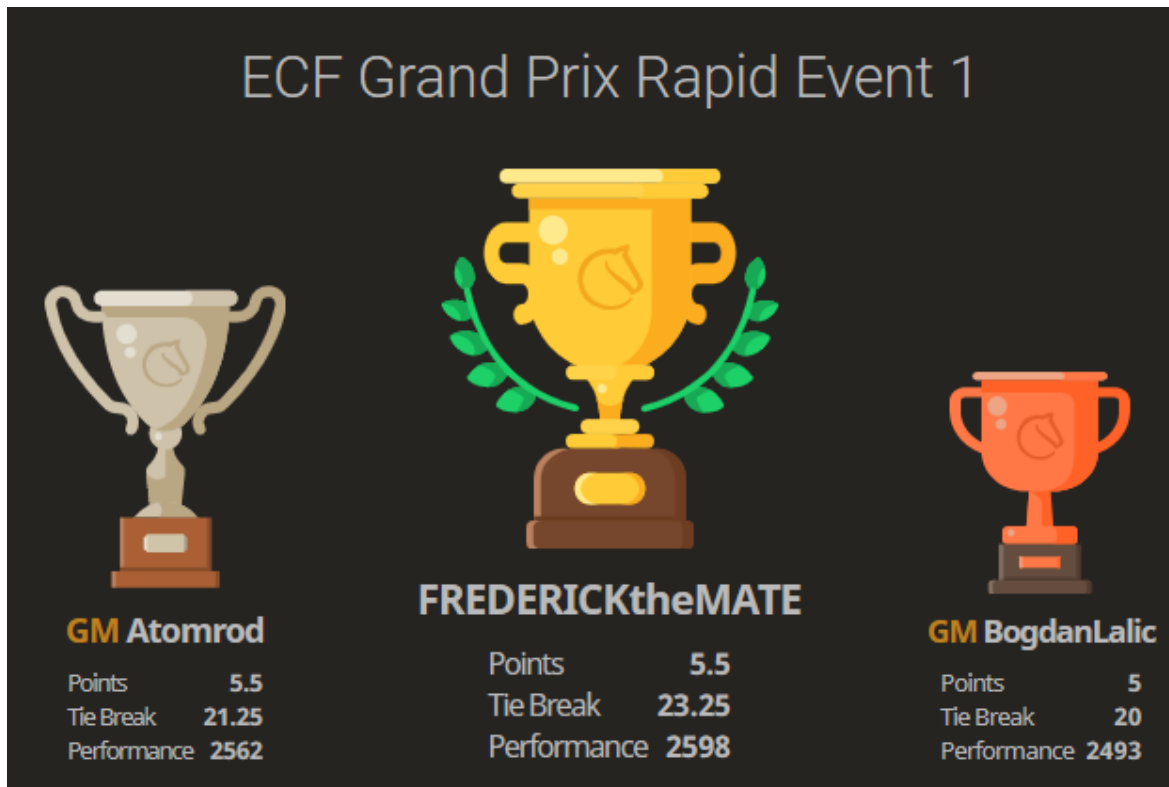
FM mysterious_expert 10 hours ago

Team Name | Number of Points after 4/3/21

1. Espana Chess Club-PH International | 371
2. Chess Viña | 370
3. 356 | فلك الإفلاك
4. ILOILO FRIENDLY CHESS | 342
5. Guillon chess | 331
6. English Chess Players | 311
7. 🏆🏆🏆 Dimitar & Friends 🏆🏆🏆 | 302
8. SK 1962 Ladenburg e.V. | 298
9. VIT United | 292
10. Team Zaporizhzhia Region | Збірна Запорізької області | 272
11. Podunavac - Belegiš | 265
12. FEDERATA E SHAHUT E KOSOVËS | 262
13. Nandy's Candies | 257
14. Nkwe School of Chess | 251
15. FCPL - UAE | 250
16. GPN_club | 229
17. ChessLab | 225
18. Dajak | 221
19. 213 | شاه مات اذربایجان
20. Colegas de Kike | 208
21. ChessHouseCocotexas | 195
22. El Team Colombia | 173
23. Madagascar Chess Club | 162
24. Dark Horse | 141
25. Sweden Vikings | 115

ECF Online Grand Prix

The ECF Online Blitz and Rapid Grand Prix Series continue with some well subscribed events on the Lichess.org platform. The first Rapid tournament attracted a field of over 120 players in a very competitive event with winners as below -



We are publishing a leader board which is updated following the events, with prizes for the winners in eight categories at the end of each series including Open, Women's, Senior, Junior, U2000 U1700, U1400, and U1100.

Please see the links here to enter either series -

Online Blitz Grand Prix - <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/m1umalxs00wt7hj/>

Rapid Grand Prix - <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/mn0wucv0iq3nkx/>

Online Events – 2021

We plan to continue with some major online events over the coming months. These can be found in the summary ECF Online calendar here -

<https://englishchessonline.org.uk/ecf-national-events/ecf-online-national-events-calendar-2021/>

Two events of particular note are -

ECF Chess for All

The English Chess Federation is launching a Chess for All Festival to take place on chess.com from Sunday 30 May – Friday 4 June followed by the 2021 'Rematch' Marathon on 5 and 6 June. There will be training, streams and tournaments all tailored to two distinct groups: beginners and improvers. More details from organiser Danny Rosenbaum elsewhere in the Newsletter.

2021 British Online Championships II - 24 July - 8 August 2021

This will follow much the same format as BOCC-I over Christmas 2020 and will include Qualifiers and Finals for the 2021 British Online Open, Women, Seniors and Junior Championships. We will also be running Major Open and Rating Limited online competitions over the same period. Please follow the link to the BOCC-2 web page here for more details - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/british-online-chess-championships-2021/>. The entry form will be available shortly.

Over the Board Events – 2021

We are now planning a number of Over the Board Events for 2021.

English Counties 2021

We are looking to schedule some friendly county events for August and September 2021 which will be open to all counties and with the potential to use some new formats including hybrid team matches, dependant on feedback from associations and the progress of the opening up process. All being well we are planning for the 2021/2022 OTB counties season to start in earnest with regional stages starting in October and finals next year.

British Championships 2021 – 2nd October-10th October

The over the board championships are now scheduled for October at two or three separate venues covering Open, Women, Seniors and Juniors Finals, with Seniors and Juniors co-located and on different days. The events will run daily during the week and weekends, with the junior finals over the weekend of 2nd and 3rd October. Qualifications will be based on the 2021 summer online competition with those who qualify for a final invited to play. For the Championship we are also considering

whether or not we can invite those who qualified for the 2020 OTB or if these should be deferred to the 2022 Championship in Torquay. There may also be a Major Open and rating limited competitions at an additional venue alongside the other events, or possibly in February 2022, and dependant on player feedback and level of interest.

New to Chess

As well as the elite events we are also looking at how we can support new players who are looking to take up the game following *The Queen's Gambit* Netflix series. The latest version of our New to Chess Page now includes general advice, web and coaching/ educational resources and can be found here -

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/new-to-chess/>

Arbiters

We have an arbiters course scheduled for April covering over-the-board and online arbiting and have published the new set of ECF online arbiter duties and levels which you can find on the web site here -

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/arbiters/ecf-arbiters/>

Registered Coaches Scheme

This is now up and running thanks to IM Andrew Martin and supporting team and is proving very popular with a number of coaches now registered and listed on the ECF web site. You can find further details here -

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/list-of-ecf-registered-coaches/>



ECF Academy

Alex Longson writes --- The March theme in the Academy was 'Learning from the World Champions – Bobby Fischer'. This has proved to be a popular topic mixing some amazing chess games with a historical perspective on the controversial American grandmaster. Those interested in some of the annotated games and puzzles can get an idea here - <https://lichess.org/study/tr78F1Yh>

The theme for April is 'Calculation' and the emphasis is very much on encouraging and motivating students to work on their concentration and visualisation skills. We are running some new class formats this month to experiment with how best to do this. Readers of this Newsletter may fancy having a crack at one of the Academy challenges this month – The Chess IQ Test Historical Knight Move Exercise here - <http://www.cypresschess.com/p/chessiq.htm>



ECF Social Media manager **Danny Rosenbaum** reports on two forthcoming events

Another Marathon

Last year the ECF organised a very successful online 24-hour tournament Checkmate Covid-19 in aid of the British Red Cross. 459 players competed in the marathon, and amazingly after 9872 games and 24 hours it all came down to literally the last second when FM Harry Grieve secured a draw which in a plot line worthy of Thunderbirds (where generally speaking the world was saved with a second to spare) took him to 517 points, edging GM Danny Gormally on 516 points to the top spot. This year we will be holding Checkmate Covid-19: The Rematch. Once again, the more players the merrier and we are hoping to have a field like last year ranging from beginners to top grandmasters.

This year the tournament will take place the weekend of June 5th-6th and of course you don't need to play all 24 hours! Feel free to dip and out. Only those who have donated £5.00 or more before the event starts are eligible for any prizes. We are hoping that like last year, the chess community will come together to support this great cause and donate even if they don't think they will be in the running for prizes. There are more details to come, but there is no time like the present! Please act now and join the tournament and donate to the British Red Cross here -

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/festival-of-chess-british-red-cross-marathon/>

Chess for All

Please spread the word - the English Chess Federation is launching a Chess For All Festival to take place on chess.com from Sunday 30th May-Friday 4th June. There will be training, streams and tournaments all tailored to two distinct groups: beginners and improvers. The ECF wants to reach out to the numerous people of all ages who have been attracted to chess in recent times either because of the pandemic or The Queen's Gambit. As part of the Festival we will be offering core training in a friendly environment to further newcomers' love and understanding of chess. We will be giving free Supporter membership for all entrants to the end of the membership season. This will allow anybody that signs up to play in all ECF online tournaments to the end of August - more here at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/festival-of-chess-british-red-cross-marathon/>



ECF Finance Council Meeting

This year's FCM takes place on Saturday April 24th online, starting at 1.30pm, via the Zoom app. The papers are here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/about/ecf-council-and-board/> - and will be added to as more documentation becomes available.



Inclusivity in Chess

Mark Jordan writes on a research project on equality, diversity and combating discrimination in chess. He needs your help.

Last year, due to the coincidence of the screening of *The Queen's Gambit* and the Covid-19 Coronavirus prompting lockdowns leaving lots of people with time on their hands, there was a boom in interest in chess as evidenced by the huge numbers signing up to chess platforms and purchasing chess sets. This boom, amidst so much chaos and tragedy, has been one positive thing that has occurred and there is value to be had in retaining at least some of these new enthusiasts far beyond the initial impetus. Such an influx of players will invigorate the chess world at a grassroots level. So how do we retain them? Part of the answer may be in a new push to encourage equality and diversity and discourage discrimination, which is currently underway in FIDE.

The motto of FIDE is 'Gens Una Sumus', adopted in 1924 when FIDE was founded with a much smaller membership, and means 'We are One People'. This laudable aspiration was difficult to live up to at the time and remains so in the present when FIDE has 196 member federations and numerous affiliate organisations across the globe.

The ECF draft Strategy Plan Oct 2019 states:

"Our biggest asset is our membership. We will continue to improve the attractiveness of membership through good communication and enhanced membership services and offerings. We recognise that the ECF needs to grow its membership and improve the attractiveness of the game in order to sustain a viable future."

This plan to increase membership and find ways to enhance membership services is certainly consistent with the effort to attract and retain all these new chess enthusiasts. As well as this we want to promote equality, celebrate diversity and discourage discrimination, but we do not currently have policies and procedures in place. Since sporting bodies and almost all other organisations, both public and private, have been obliged to develop just such policies to abide by current English law and, not incidentally to access sponsorship and funding, this is an unfortunate deficit.

The ECF is aware of this issue and especially in the light of the current efforts by FIDE to get up to speed on equality, diversity and discrimination, it appears to be a good time to look at these issues with a view to developing practical and acceptable solutions. With this in mind the ECF board recently voted to explore the issues and ascertain what can be done and I have been asked to bring together some proposals which can be used as a basis for developing and then implementing appropriate policies and procedures. This is a smaller mountain to climb than that faced by FIDE as at least ECF has only one legal jurisdiction with which to contend, but it is not a trivial undertaking.

I really need some help in these efforts and so I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who can spare some time to lend a hand or who can provide good examples of practical measures that have been used to promote equality and diversity and combat discrimination or examples of situations where these high principles have not been honoured.

If you can help or have any suggestions or comments you can contact me on markjordan25994@gmail.com

Brought to book

The ECF have published the popular *ECF Yearbook* which can be viewed online free of charge here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-yearbook-2021>. As always, a lot of hard work from contributors, the editing team and the layout by our webmaster Andrew Walker have combined to make this an excellent read. The print version will be available from mid-April at a cost of £15.50 including postage and packing for members. Please watch the website for more details as they are posted ...



British Chess Championships 2021

After some consideration the BCC Organisers and the ECF have decided that the 2021 British Chess Championships will not go ahead as a single event in Torquay in July/August due to the risks involved with holding a large event at this time. We have agreed with Torquay Council that the venue booking will be carried forward a further year to summer 2022, for next year's British Chess Championships.

We can confirm that we will be organising a second British Online Chess Championships for the end of July/beginning of August 2021, with the same set of qualifiers, championships and rating-limited events as there were in the first, and very successful, BOCC held in December 2020/January 2021.

In addition, we are planning to organise a 2021 over-the-board British Championships in a slightly different format to take place in the first two weeks of October 2021, and based on –

- Championship places including qualifications for the cancelled 2020 British Chess Championships, together with new qualification places from the 2021 BOCC in August (as above)
- A number of smaller, geographically separated venues to host the different championships, which should reduce the numbers at any single location and avoid the need for players to travel long distances.

This means that we can resume with an over-the-board British Chess Championships in a different format after last year's interruption. We will keep you posted with a detailed schedule, dates and entry forms for the online and over-the-board British events over the coming months, and look forward to the various British events later in the year.



From chess board to keyboard – Mark Rivlin

I started editing the ECF Newsletter in July 2017 and have been very impressed with the content sent in by members. Aside from Tim Wall's excellent polemics we have featured a number of articles submitted by ECF members who have an opinion about a range of chess topics.

Last month I linked to a great article by Chris Beckett in medium.com - https://medium.com/@chris_beckett/pawn-addiction-helps-me-beat-the-lockdown-

[blues-37b294f02636](#). There have been many other submissions over the past four years and I believe there is a parallel between creativity on and off the chess board.

My favourite novelist is Paul Auster and he took on the editing of this interesting project - <https://www.amazon.co.uk/True-Tales-American-Life-Auster/dp/0571210708>

The book came out of a short story event on National Public Radio in the USA where people sent in everyday life experiences and Auster chose the best and edited the finished book project. What stands out is how writing acts as a creative meritocracy with high-quality submissions.

We are inviting ECF members to provide creative writing on any topic related to chess. Fact, fiction, humorous, irreverent, sad or angry, please help us with this creative project which will entertain and inform future generations of chess enthusiasts. You can write on anything, from analysing games to the long journey home after you snatched defeat from the jaws of victory (I can give you a lot of help on this topic); from the minutiae of yet another church with an Arctic wind hitting the board closest to the door to how you went from longplay to blitz, and now have a virtual prize for playing three million games.

All submissions will be considered for publication in the eNewsletter and in a book which will be published by the ECF. Myself and ECF Manager of Social Media Danny Rosenbaum will edit the submissions, which should be between 700 and 1000 words.

The Initiative is open to all ECF members. We welcome submissions from children but if under 18, please get a parent or guardian to confirm their consent.

So come on ECF members, let's hear your stories! For further details please email me at manager.publicity@englishchess.org.uk



The kids are alright

Director of Membership Rob Willmoth writes --- I am very pleased to announce that the ECF has arranged a partnership with ChessKid - <https://www.chesskid.com/>. This is the best software tool on the market for children to learn and improve at chess. You can set up a Basic account for free, and if you then want to upgrade to Gold you will receive a 25% discount. The difference between the Basic account and the Gold account is substantial, and can be viewed here - <https://www.chesskid.com/membership>

You can upgrade by following the instructions below —

1) Set up a ChessKid account at <https://www.chesskid.com/> - if you have one already then please go to point 2 below

2) Join the ECF Juniors ChessKid group at <https://www.chesskid.com/register/kid/group/YT6R4X> or by entering the key – **YT6R4X** – in your settings at <https://www.chesskid.com/settings/account>

3) Update to Gold at 25% discount at <https://www.chesskid.com/membership/promo/ECFJuniors> or by clicking **GoGold** in your account and entering the code **ECFJuniors**



Organising online

Witney Chess Club's Patrick Moss writes ...

It was the cat's fault...

With the pandemic preventing over-the-board play, chess players have been getting their fix online. With the Oxfordshire Chess Association setting up the 'Mike Duck Online Tournament' in late 2020, we have now had two tournaments, with Witney having two teams in the first one and three in the second. For me, these events provided the impetus I needed to get back into chess after a few years' absence, and it has been good to catch up – even if only virtually – with old acquaintances from the club. I hope that it has been a similarly useful outlet for other players across Oxfordshire. The matches seem to have been played in an excellent spirit.

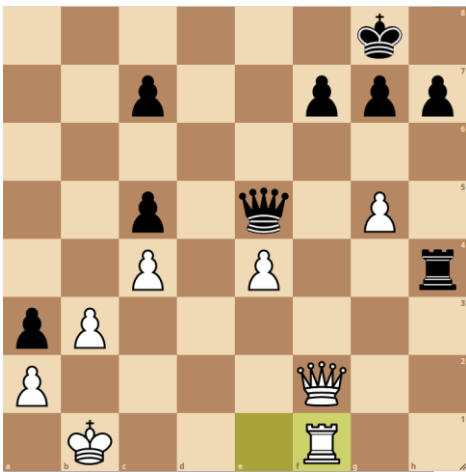
So, what have we learned from these tournaments?

1. Just like working from home, **playing from home takes some adjustment**. It may be a lot easier to get up and make a cup of tea, but it is also easier for the cat to walk across the keyboard (well, that's my excuse for bad moves). You can, however, talk to yourself, sing or yodel as much as you like during the game – all of which tend to be frowned upon in over-the-board chess.
2. **Social interaction is just as unpredictable as in real life**. Sometimes there is a friendly exchange of 'good game' or 'well played', other times all is mysteriously silent. This could well be due to 'settings' – I was halfway through the season before I discovered my Lichess settings were not allowing me to receive challenges from other players...
3. It is **great for learning**. With the ability to watch matches live, and even comment on what is going on from the safety of the armchair (the chat is not visible during the match to those playing), it is an opportunity to learn from others' successes and mistakes. I recommend playing through some of our team's games on Lichess and challenging yourself to see what you would have done, without the benefit of a computer engine telling you the answers.
4. We are **missing Witney's strongest players**. With myriad strong players on our books, I would never have expected to find myself playing Board 1 for Witney 1. Most clubs have grades 180+ on their top boards, meaning we have faced quite a

battle. I don't know the reason for this absence – perhaps online chess or the 45-minute timings appeal less to stronger players? Either way, I hope everyone is well, but please, would any top graded players reading this step forward for the next tournaments?!

5. A lot of **careful thought goes right out of the window** when those last desperate minutes of the game approach. I have both committed and benefited from some bad mistakes during time pressure. At such moments, there must be someone in Oxfordshire dancing with unexpected joy, whilst elsewhere another person is raging furiously in exactly equal measure!

Finally, I was comprehensively outplayed in the latter stages of a match. Black to move. Playing White, I have just played Rf1, threatening rook and the pawn on f7. But can you see what I missed here? (image from Lichess.org).



[Answer: Black played Rf4! I had only anticipated Qxe4+ but thought that after Kc1 I was still OK. I had overlooked that after Rf4 if QxR then Qb2#].



New ECF Registered Coaching Scheme

Follow this link to visit the web page and get the full lowdown ---

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/new-ecf-registered-coaches-scheme/>



European Online

Director of International Chess **Malcolm Pein** reports ---

Four English teams participated in the European Online Club Cup. I was particularly pleased to see Guildford make their first foray into Europe as 4NCL champions. Wood Green, Wood Green Monarchs and Celtic Tigers all pretty much played to their seedings in the qualifying groups and several opportunities were provided to some of England's best young and junior players to gain experience against strong opposition. Even I was afforded one such opportunity, but wasted it by playing badly in my individual game against Alexei Shirov.

Guildford progressed through a tough qualifying group and an even tougher play off group to get to the ten-team final. Guildford lost three matches by the narrowest margin and ended seventh (see the report from Roger Emerson below).

David Howell and Gawain Jones both confirmed their excellent reputations in online play, winning individual board prizes. Howell's 2725 performance on board two secured a bronze and Jones's 2708 performance on board four was good for an individual silver. Internet chess is a young man's game which was rather confirmed by the failure of the favourites Baden Baden and the success of the youthful German team SF Deizisau e.V.

The ECF International Directorate will organise a hybrid tournament in May to enable some of our top players to participate in the European Online Individual Championship where the top 36 qualify for the World Cup. Results are here - <http://chess-results.com/tnr550240.aspx?lan=1&art=8&turdet=YES&flag=30>



Guild edge

Roger Emerson reports on Guildford's challenge ...

The European Chess Union's Online Chess Club Cup was held on 27-31 March 2021 and attracted 90 teams. Bundesliga champions Baden-Baden, headed by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, were top seeds, and there were also strong teams from Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and almost every European Union Country. Three 4NCL teams (Guildford 4NCL, Wood Green and Wood Green Monarchs) represented England, while Celtic Tigers flew the flag for Wales. Further 4NCL representation was evidenced by CSU Bucharest, built around the nucleus of Manx Liberty's top players, while Keith Arkell was part of a French team. For Guildford, Nigel Povah and I had secured the services of Mickey Adams, David Howell, Luke McShane, Gawain Maroroa Jones and Ivan Cheparinov, making us fourth seeds overall.

The playing schedule was unremitting from the start, with four or five matches every day, at a rate of 15 minutes plus 5 second increments. We came through the qualifying rounds comfortably but, after a good first day, Wood Green fell away on the second against tougher opposition; so they, Monarchs and Tigers were all eliminated. There were a minor few upsets against seedings, but Baden-Baden just managed to avoid the biggest upset of all by just qualifying in second place in group A.

In the next stage, seedings were based on performance at the group stage, which meant that our group included two other group winners plus Baden-Baden. We lost early on to the Russian 3rd seeds after Gawain Jones lost a 100-move marathon against Esipenko, but we beat Baden-Baden easily. Further wins had us qualifying for the finals with a round to spare. Meanwhile, following defeat to us, Baden-Baden imploded and were eliminated

So far so good! But that tough play-off group, involving a number of very long games, clearly took its toll. We looked, on paper, to have a relatively easy first day of the final, including matches against three of the four lowest seeded teams, but that proved a mirage as we only picked up two points from a possible 8. We managed to bounce back a bit on the last day, with a win against the remaining top seed Novy Bor, but the damage had been done the day before. Meanwhile Jorden Van Foreest followed up his Wijk-an-Zee success by leading Clichy to second place, while the young Deisizau team from South Germany (sponsored by Baden-Baden's Grenke company) came a surprise clear first, thanks in part to a 2700+ performance by 23 year old Matthias Bluebaum on top board.

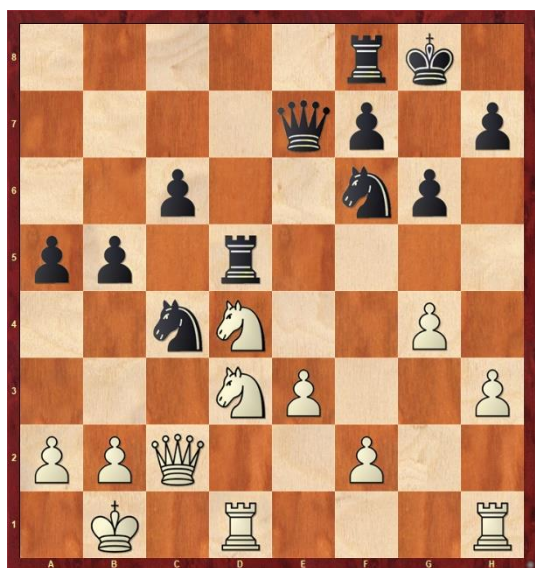
The organising team, led ably by Jirina Prokopova, had clearly put in a great deal of work to ensure that the event ran smoothly, including providing captains with a comprehensive guide and arranging a short practice tournament so that all players could get used to the Tornelo platform and to the computer, zoom and webcam requirements to ensure fair play. This definitely paid off, with no reported suspicions of cheating and with problems dealt with clearly, calmly and efficiently. My thanks and congratulations to Jirina, to her deputies (including Alex Holowczak) and indeed to the whole organising team.

Now, finally, for a few comments on the games! Mark Crowther's *The Week In Chess* has a detailed report on the tournament, with links to download all the games and a number of illustrative games

(<https://theweekinchess.com/chessnews/events/european-online-chess-club-cup-2021>), or you can download them all from Chess-Results.com (<https://chess-results.com/tnr550240.aspx?lan=1&art=0&fed=CZE&turdet=YES&flag=30>)

A few memorable games for me ---

Against Tomashevsky, Mickey slowly built up winning pressure on the queenside



26....Rc8 27 Nf4 Rc5 28 Qe2 a4 29 Rc1 Ne4 30 Rc2 a3 31 b3 Ncd2+ 32 Kc1 Rxc2 33 Nxc2 Qf6 34 Nd3 Nxb3+ 35 axb3 a2 36 Rd1 Qc3 and White resigned.

Luke nursed a small advantage against Kamsky through to victory, starting with a fine manoeuvre



46 Nh2! Ng5 47 Ng4 Qe7 48 f4! Nf7 (48...exf4 49 gxf4 Nxe4? 50 Qxe4! Qxe4 51 Nf6+) 49 Qf3 Nxe6 50 Qh1! Qg7 51 Qh4 g5 52 fxg5 fxg5 53 Qh5 Qg6 54 Qxh6+ Qxh6 55 Nxe6 Kxh6 56 Kf2 with a winning endgame. White will play b4 followed by c4, and his outside passed pawn will win the game. So after a few more moves Kamsky resigned.

David played very solidly and beat some highly rated opponents, but just about all his wins were long-drawn out affairs where, with both sides pretty much down to 5 second increments, David's relative strengths came to the fore. This earned him the overall bronze medal for board 2, after Vidit and Matlakov – a fine performance!

Ivan proved very efficient at beating up opponents on board 4 and was instrumental in ensuring us a relatively painless qualification for the final, but for swashbuckling attacks I have to turn to Gawain's games, none more so than his game against Timofeev. Gawain eventually lost this in 101 moves, after Timofeev had beaten off Gawain's sacrificial attack by giving up his queen for two minor pieces. Gawain was a rook down at the time! If only Gawain had found the star move, it could have been the game of the tournament. Here is the symmetrical position after Black's 9th move:



10 Bxc5 Qa5 11 Be3 Bxc4 12 Nd2 Be6 13 h3 Qh5 14 g4 Bxg4!? 15 hxg4 Nxg4 16 Bf4?!
(16 Nf3 Be5 17 Re1 Nxe3 18 fxe3 Bg3 with dangerous threats, although Stockfish
thinks White can hold) Be5 17 Qa4 Rad8 18 Nf3 Rd4! 19 Nxd4 Bxf4 20 Rfd1
(desperately making room for his king to escape) and now Gawain played 20....Ne3 21
fxe3 Bxe3+ 22 Kf1 Nxd4 23 Qxd4! (a great practical choice, stopping Black's attack
altogether, and Timofeev won after another 70 moves!

Going back to the position after 20 Rfd1, can you find Black's winning move?

At the time I thought 20....Bg3 was strong (as indeed 20....Be3 may be). White can't take
the bishop, otherwise he gets mated, and 21 Nf3 is met by 21....Bxf2+ 22 Kf1 Bc5 23 Rd3
Nb4. That certainly looks good, but there's something even better! 20....b5!! White can
take the pawn in three different ways, but all of them lose: 21 Ncxb5 Qh2+ 22 Kf1 Qh4
23 Kg1 Bh2+ 24 Kh1 Nxf2# or 21 Ndxb5 Qh2+ 22 Kf1 Ne3+ 23 fxe3 Bxe3, again with
mate to follow. Finally 21 Qxb5 Qh2+ 22 Kf1 Nxd4 23 Rxd4 Nf3+! 24 fxe3 Bxe3 25 Ke1
Qxg2 26 Kd1 Bxd4 is winning. Stockfish thinks that relatively best is 21 Qc2, but then
21....Qh4 still creates a winning attack, the nicest variation being 22 Ne4 Nxd4 23 Rxd4
Bh2+ 24 Kf1 Qxf2+!! 25 Nxf2 Ne3+ 26 Kd2 Nxd4 and after all that Black is three pawns
up!

Despite that eventual loss, Gawain got a silver medal for his board 4 performance,
beaten only by Esipenko – so congratulations to Gawain! In fact, all of our players were
6th or higher in overall board ratings. My thanks to them all!



ECF Events Director

I'm delighted to announce that Shohreh Bayat has been appointed to the newly-created
post of Events Director for the ECF. In this role Shohreh will have overall responsibility
for organising and managing ECF over-the-board events, working closely with the
Home Chess, Women's Chess and Junior Chess directorates in particular, to ensure their
seamless and coordinated delivery.

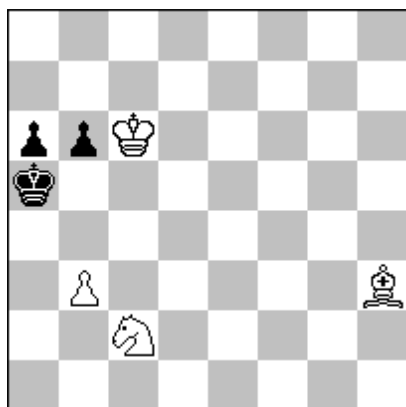
— *Mike Truran, Chief Executive*



Problem Corner

Christopher Jones is back with another monthly assignment

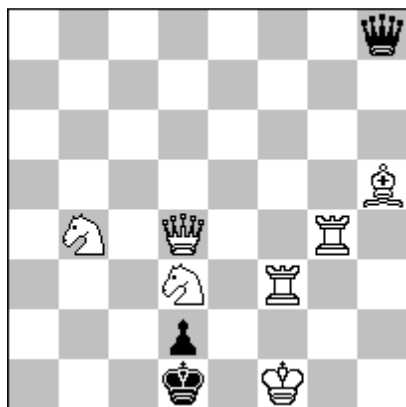
In the last Newsletter I left you with this problem –



Mikhail Gorislavsky
Schach, 1970
 Mate in 4 (b) Bh3>f1

The difficulty is that, hemmed in as Black is, we need to avoid a stalemate arising after ...Pb6>b5>b4. In each solution, it turns out that the only successful method involves White sacrificing one of his pieces. Thus (a) solves as follows: 1.Bd7 b5 2.Kc5 b4 3.Na3 bxa3 4.b4. And (b) solves by sacrificing the wB: 1.Bb5 axb5 2.Kb7 b4 3.Nd4 b5 4.Nc6. Black's shortage of moves is made to tell against him –in (a) it is only because Black's only move, ...bxa3, vacates b4 that White can play 4.b4; and in (b) Black must obligingly put a Pawn on his potential flight square on move 3.

Now here's another problem for you to get your teeth into –



Mate in 2
 Zivota Tanic
 Commendation, *Schweizerische Arbeiter Schachzeitung* 1971

Clearly, we want to move one of the Rs to allow a discovered checkmate when the second of them moves. The bQ, which has to keep an eye on the a1 square also, will be overloaded. But it turns out that it is tricky to find the unique move that succeeds. Best of luck; solution next time!

Christopher Jones - mcjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

Book Review

Gary Lane in prolific reviewing form this month with this star-studded line-up ---

The Lasker Method to Improve In Chess by Gerard Welling and Steve Giddens

Carlsen's Neo-Moller by Ionannis Simeonidis

How to Beat Magnus Carlsen by Cyrus Lakdawala

World Champion Chess for Juniors by Joel Benjamin

Defend Like Petrosian by Alexey Bezgodov

More here - <https://chess.business/blog/>

4NCL

The 7th 4NCL Online Congress takes place 23rd-25th April. More here -

https://www.4ncl.co.uk/fide/online/arrangements_7.htm

Tweet of the Month

It's Surrey right number with Epsom CC on the up (not downs) ...



Wizards of Oz

The over-the-board Doeberl Cup took place in Brisbane with Justin Tan and Daniel

Fernandez finishing top in the Premier Division with 7.5/9. Results here - <http://chess-results.com/tnr551239.aspx?lan=1&art=1&rd=9>

Georgia on my mind

David Rowson from Kingston Chess Club writes --- In March, the British-Georgian Society screened the film *Glory to the Queen* over a Zoom meeting. Directed by Tatia Skhirtladze, the film focuses on two Georgian women's world chess champions, Nona Gaprindashvili and Maia Chiburdanidze, and two leading contenders, Nana Alexandria and Nana Ioseliani. As is well-known, Georgia dominated women's chess from 1962 to 1991. More about the film here - <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8682060/>



This month's taster is [here](#). To purchase and/or subscribe, [click here](#)



A message from Chessable, sponsors of the ECF eNewsletter ...

Tear through 1.d4's proud center with the Grünfeld! Leading expert and 7-time Russian champ Peter Svidler shows you how!

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