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Dear ECF Member,

Welcome to the March edition of the e-newsletter. In this edition we have an interview with Brian Smith, secretary of London Chess League, a gentle reminder about General Data Protection Regulation, a great success in the north east with the Newcastle Chess Festival and the fascinating Random Chess match between Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura.

Playing regular club chess over many years I have come to realise that conditions of play can vary considerably. The board and pieces may be a similar shape and size and I'm certainly not bothered what they are made of. What can be of concern however, is what might constitute unacceptable playing conditions (lack of space to manoeuvre, peripheral noise and poor heating or cooling). I fully understand that a lot of chess tournaments do not have budgets that meet the very good conditions offered by 4NCL and London Chess Classic (and plenty of other tournaments). But if a venue is so cold that players have to wear a coat, or, as I have experienced in my long and mediocre career, are competing with a monthly karaoke quiz in the downstairs area of a boozier ("In what year was this a hit for Abba?", cue blaring rendition of 'Dancing Queen') or a children's party pass-the-parcel medley, or indeed playing a match on chairs designed for eight year-olds in a primary school. And don't get me started on some naughty clubs and venues that don't provide tea and biscuits which surely should be a minimum requirement. Coming out of an opening much worse (I am an authority on this) there is at least a warm glow from dunking a solid Hobnob into a steaming cuppa to get the tank refuelled (see Peter Kay's take on this [here](#)). This is not a naming and shaming exercise – rather, it's to see if there is a consensus on whether it actually matters.

Enjoy the Spring (if it ever arrives).

Mark Rivlin

Across the Board

Interview with Brian Smith, secretary of London Chess League.

Tell us a bit about LCL's history and the league's current stats

Last season 2016-17 was a memorable year for LCL with over 1000 players and 70 teams in our six divisions. But it's not only the number of players, but also the quality that we are particularly proud of. Possibly the oldest Chess League in the World, LCL's 130-year Div1 record of 22 Championship wins (held by the Hampstead Club of the Penrose brothers in the 1950s-60s) was broken by Wood Green CC with 23 Championships. A great season indeed for celebration.

How long have you been secretary and what have been the highlights and downside of running such a big league?

I have been LCL Secretary since 2002, with much help from ex-President Alan Martin to run LCL's first website so that everyone could see results on something new called *The Internet* using a device

called *Email*. We are now in the extremely clever hands of our website and database manager John Upham who keeps our playing records protected and accessible for all.

After around 25 years at the legendary (if slightly run-down) Golden Lane venue, the league has moved to the more upmarket Citadines Hotel in Holborn. Describe the difference in venues and whether paying more for a venue gives added value.

Most players who given feedback on Citadines have decided that the free tea and coffee, followed by analysis space with a cheap beer is worth the extra charge for playing at a more upmarket venue. And of course being located only 100m from Holborn Tube is very handy. The bottom line is this, where in London can you get an evening's entertainment with refreshments for £3.50?

What kind of help would you like to see the ECF provide a league of your size and stature?

Game Fees were much easier for most of England's Winter Leagues and Clubs to administer, with known fixed charges when the season started. Now it is more difficult for clubs to calculate costs if players who are members of other Federations decide not to join ECF. This is particularly relevant in London.

In the new venue most matches are played on one night. A cursory glance at the demographics suggests that the league is not attracting people that reflect the diversity of Britain (usually around 85 per cent of players are white men aged 30-plus). Does this concern you and is there anything that you can do to address this issue?

This observation probably reflects who wants to learn and play chess. Things are rapidly changing because all of the recent new clubs joining LCL are from London's minority backgrounds. The great work done by CSC (Chess in Schools and Communities) and its supporters is having an impact. We are delighted that BBKA (British Bangla Chess Association and Alfil) have joined the league and it is particularly welcoming to see young players participating.

Five years ago, the league introduced two divisions for players graded under 145 and 125. How popular has this been and would you consider a division for U100 players in order to attract an 'advanced beginner' cohort?

The Major and Minor Divisions are sponsored by Chess and Bridge and they have been a great success for LCL because it gives our players with lower ratings an opportunity to play games and support their club. A few weeks ago we laid out the tables so that a Division Six game was next to the Wood Green juggernaut so a 120-ish rated player was rubbing shoulders with Luke McShane. Who knows, Luke may have picked up some handy tips watching!

Most club chess players turn up for a game and then go off for a beer or three. Give us an idea of how much work goes into preparing for a league night.

I arrive at Citadines hotel around two and a half hours before kick-off at 7pm. Setting up 100 boards with pieces, scoresheets, clock adjustments and team cards takes time. I am very much indebted to our 70 team captains who sometimes have a difficult time getting a full team to turn out for their pre-arranged matches. And they in turn are thankful to their reserves who come along just in case they are needed. There is always help from players in setting up. What people tend to forget, having been immersed in a three-hour match, is that the process has to be reversed at around 10.15pm so it is rare that I leave the hotel before 11.30pm. Our superb treasurer Andy Heard does a lot of work keeping us afloat (literally) and for more than a quarter of a century, Vic Rumsey has carried out the extremely difficult tasks of preparing the more than 400 matches as LCL's Fixtures Secretary, a task that has become even more difficult with the move from three nights a week to one. The other members of LCL's extremely efficient Committee are the 'referees' who have to rule on disputes, but thankfully these are extremely rare.

You are one of the few leagues in the country that still offer adjournments. Is the flag about to drop for this type of time control?

At present we have odd boards playing quicker play (30 moves/75mins then 20 minutes more for a finish on the night; even boards playing the more traditional 36 moves/90mins and then adjournment if no result is reached. If both players agree to switch from default that is fine. Fortunately more players are moving to our quicker play option as they know that if they decide on the longer play and adjournment they will be playing a computer upon resumption. I would not be surprised if this issue is brought up at our AGM.

Fee-day rating The ECF is making junior pay-to-play fees more reasonable, [more here](#)

FIDE berating More trouble at the FIDE inn with a confirmation missive from treasurer Adrian Siegel that the game's governing body may soon have its bank account frozen due to Kirsan Ilyumzhinov being on the USA sanction list for alleged dealings with President Assad of Syria. Background document [here](#). Full document [here](#)

Data remember GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) is coming soon. ECF Director of Membership outlines the main features of the new legislation:

GDPR is the new data protection legislation which comes in to force in May. It relates to all individuals and organisations who collect, store, or process personal data, defined as "any information relating to an identifiable person ...". The major change in the Law from the point of view of organisers is the need to document what data you collect, why you collect it, what use you make of it, and whom you pass it on to. This is an onerous requirement. The ECF is drafting guidance for clubs and organisations; in the meantime the best resource available for further information is the official [ICO Guide to GDPR](#).

Club UK United Kingdom Chess Challenge: More than 65,000 children take part in this national event on an annual basis; this year the overall champion at club level was Devan Patel on 19 points. Second place went to Dhiren Bahia and Cameron Rehman, both on 18 points. In third place was Arryan Singh on 17 points – a close call in the last round between Devan, Cameron and Dhiren. [More here](#)

Hip hip Howay! FM Tim Wall reports on a very successful Northumbria Masters and Newcastle Chess Festival. The tournament had two aims – to provide opportunities for norms, and to give players in the north of England a chance to play international chess without having to travel large distances. It was run alongside other events in the Newcastle Chess Festival, including the Northern Junior Championships at Excelsior Academy, a public simul in Newcastle City Library by GM Danny Gormally, and a GM coaching session at Forest Hall Chess Club by Russian GM and author Alexander Raetsky. Russian-born 19-year-old German GM Alexander Donchenko won the Masters and first prize of £1,200 with 7/9, ahead of 22-year-old Jakhongir Vakhidov of Uzbekistan, with 6.5/9, who won £600. On 6/9 were Northumberland GM Danny Gormally, who lives just 30 miles from Newcastle in the town of Alnwick, Ravi Haria (England), Martin Percivaldi (Denmark), and Alexander Raetsky (Russia) - at 58 years old the top veteran player in what was a punishing schedule of two rounds a day. With seven GMs and 11 IMs in a field of 50 players (and an average rating of 2217) the tournament was by far the strongest in the north of England for some years. The closest English player to narrowly miss an IM norm was Paul Macklin, of Chorlton, who scored 5.5/9 and qualified for the 2018 British Championship in Hull. The Northumbria Masters benefited from sponsorship from the ECF and Capital Bridging Finance Solutions, a Liverpool-based company keen to support chess around the UK, as well as various donations from chess charities. The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust sponsored the entry fees and pre-tournament training for five local juniors. It is planned to make the tournament an annual event, to be held again in the February half-term school holidays, and to build the Newcastle Chess Festival to develop chess in the North East of England. [More here](#) and [here](#)

Magic Mushroom International Arbiter [David Sedgwick](#) has been reappointed as the Grand Chess Tour Chief Arbiter for 2018. David regularly turns out for Mushrooms in the London League and has a healthy 173 standard play grade. Congratulations, David

That's the Spirit, John A highly entertaining round-up of 4NCL Division 1a from Spirit of Atticus's John Carleton [here](#) and [here](#) and a heads-up for Spring Bank Holiday 4NCL FIDE-rated tournament [here](#)

Be a sport An important online petition has been launched to persuade Sport England to recognise chess as a sport. If you agree with this sentiment then [here is a link](#) for you to participate in the petition.

Junior news

School of Rook The ECF academy is nurturing the cream of the country's talented youngsters.

[Here's a report on the recent academy weekend](#)

Nine, going on 14 Nine-year-old Shreyas Royal batted well above his already high average to win the U14 Major at the West of England Junior Chess Championships on 17-18 February in Swindon.

Under 18 County Championships Kent and Norfolk take the titles. After an absence in 2017, the ECF Under 18 county championships made a welcome return, this time hosted by the King's School in Grantham. Kent won the Open and Norfolk won the U130 sections. Neill Cooper was the tournament controller ably supported by arbiters Phill Beckett and John Swain whose excellent roundup is [here](#)

ESPCA For news of forthcoming events and updates from the English Primary School Chess Association please [see here](#)

Regions to be cheerful [West of England Junior Chess Championship](#) results

[North of England Junior Chess Championships](#)

Junior 4NCL ECF Director of Home Chess Alex Holowczak reports on the second round of Junior 4NCL: The 2nd weekend of the 2017/18 Junior 4NCL weekend was held at the Park Inn Hotel in Telford. 32 squads of players participated, with the top 10 being entered into Division 1. Cambridge Knights had defied their seeding to win the first weekend, but they followed that success by winning Division 1 in the second weekend too. They won 4 of their 5 matches. English Queens finished second, and the Chess in Schools' second team finished third, comfortably beating their first team in the process! In Division 2, Welsh Dragons Green won against Welsh Dragons Blue to win the competition. They finished ahead of Barnet Knights 2 and Robin Hoods.

The final tables are [here](#) and [here](#).

Back rank fate? Magnus Carlsen and Hikaro Nakamura battled out a fascinating five days of creative chess in the Fischer Random Chess Challenge in Norway. Nice to start with 1: 0-0! [Here's](#) Leonard Barden's take and [more here](#):

Club Class The ECF National Club Championships 2018 is one of the most popular tournaments of the season, a weekend away with three mates and the usual grading sections. This year the tournament will be played at the Park Inn by Radisson Telford Hotel, Forgegate, Telford Centre, Telford, Shropshire TF3 4NA on Saturday 7 April and Sunday 8 April 2018. Enquiries to nationalclub@englishchess.org.uk Guy Greenland/Alex Holowczak.

Entry is £25.00 per team of four, rising to £30.00 after March 24th 2018. Discounts on entry available for those staying overnight at the Hotel (per three persons).

Gary Lane's Book Review [The Art of the Tarrasch Defence](#) by Alexy Bezgodov

Deaths and obituaries:

Unfortunately February has seen a number of deaths in the chess community. Some lovely memories here:

[Simon Bartlett](#)

[Stan Cramer](#)

[Dave Springgay](#)

[Tim Upton](#)

[Robert Everson](#)

[Tatiana Zatulovskaya](#)

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For the National Schools Chess Championships website - click [here](#)

For the British Chess Championships 2016 website - click [here](#)

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