

Oxfordshire Chess Association
May Committee Meeting
Held by Zoom Video Conference
7.30pm, Thursday 28 May 2020

Abbreviations used: ECF: English Chess Federation; OCA: Oxfordshire Chess Association; FWS: Frank Wood Shield, FIDE: Fédération Internationale des Échecs (International Chess Federation),

Present: Ian Bush (Chair), Roger Thetford (Secretary/Webmaster), Peter Hemmings (Grading Officer), Andrew Varney (Junior Liaison Officer), Will Burt (Minutes Secretary), Kevin Henbest (University Representative/Vice-Chair), Stephen Rumsby (U150 Team Captain), Gerard O'Reilly (County Individual Championship Organiser), Sara Sengenberger (Treasurer), Rod Langham (Open Team Captain).

1. Chair's Introduction: Ian Bush welcomed participants and explained protocols for conducting the video conference.

2. Apologies for Absence: Asif Hameed (Fixtures Secretary), Mike Truran (ECF Representative).

3. Minutes of 2019 May Committee: these were approved and there were no matters arising.

4. County Matters: Rod Langham (Open Team) and Steve Rumsby (U150 Team) have submitted their reports for last season. The Chair asked for further news. Rod says email exchanges with other team captains suggest they do not think the Chiltern League will happen next year. Both Rod and Steve are opposed to playing over the board county chess until things are clearer and will keep the Secretary informed of further developments.

5. Appointment of Chiltern League Captains: Both current captains are willing to continue in their roles. The committee thanked Steve Rumsby for organising Oxfordshire's participation in the ECF's online county competition.

6. League Matters: As detailed in the Secretary's report, it was agreed in late March to end the season. Titles were not awarded except to Oxford University 1, run away leader of Division I, while individual awards were based on the matches able to be completed. There were fewer defaults this season, except in the FWS. The report also contained proposed rule

changes, one introducing incremental time controls to all competitions and the other about the use of published ratings.

The composition of the league was discussed. Cowley want to drop one team but wish to retain their Division IV ‘development’ team and two teams in Division II. After discussion of the overall interests of the league Cowley were allowed to keep their ‘development’ team in Division IV, but will have two teams in Division III rather than Division II. Oxford City acquiesced to have their second team (which finished bottom of Division II) effectively relegated to Division III. These changes give a 7/7/7/7 league structure.

7. Fixtures: The fixtures secretary Asif Hameed (not present) will be asked to produce a list based on the proposed league structure, setting aside the final week of the University’s Michelmas term for the opening round of the FWS (as was supposed to have happened last season, but didn’t).

University representative Kevin Henbest was happy with the FWS arrangement but said last season home fixtures were mostly in just one half of the season. Other clubs have had similar issues. The currently used algorithm does not enforce any alternation of home and away fixtures and the Secretary will feed this issue back to Asif. It was also agreed to ask him to produce a draft fixtures list by the end of July.

8. Awards: See item 6 above. Matt Rose has not yet adjudicated on the Ray Starkie award.

9. ECF Matters: As ECF representative Mike Truran is not present and has not submitted a report this item was skipped.

10. AGM Date and Venue: This meeting will probably need to be held by video conference and the date chosen was Thursday 24 September.

11. Proposals for Rule Changes: There was general support for the introduction of incremental time limits throughout the league, even from clubs who do not have many digital clocks yet.

The proposed rule change for gradings would introduce flexibility around the time that updated lists are published. However the meeting felt it was more important to be completely clear over which rating list is in use at any given point in time. The issue of rapidly improving juniors not being able to play at a suitable level was raised but the ECF intends to move to monthly rating lists in due course, which would make this much less of a problem.

Ian Bush and Gerard O’Reilly will look again at the use of rating

lists and come up with a new version of the proposal for the AGM.

Grading Officer Peter Hemmings expressed concern about the need to make more than two submissions per year and Andrew Varney, who grades some junior events, sympathised. Roger Thetford said ECF systems for submissions had recently been somewhat improved.

12. Covid-19 and 2020/21 Season Preparations: The Chair and Secretary have discussed the situation and suggest we start next season online, with otherwise usual arrangements, until such time as we are able to return to over the board chess. A subcommittee will look into the details and clubs should be encouraged to play trial online matches and provide feedback.

It was suggested that we could also use the unfinished stages of the FWS as a test bed. A vote favoured restarting the FWS but the question arose of whether this was within the rules and constitution. [Note: Ian Bush and Gerard O'Reilly have subsequently investigated this and concluded that we cannot restart the 2019/20 FWS.]

Other issues with online chess were highlighted: the long screen time and also having appropriate safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults. Regarding the possibility of cheating: online platforms have their own measures and Andrew Varney said the ECF has also just published documents about the issue.

A subcommittee was formed, to report by the end of July with proposals for clubs to consider, consisting of the Chair and Secretary aided by Steve Rumsby (who has experience of organising online matches) and Andrew Varney (who can advise on safeguarding issues). Rod Langham suggested that the fixtures secretary arrange matches in weekly blocks, as we are not tied to club nights when playing online.

13. Any Other Business: Peter Hemmings says that a game where the result was given as 0–0, following a dispute plus a sanction, was rejected by the ECF when he submitted it for grading. Further discussion of this was deferred.

The meeting closed at 9.36pm.

Will Burt (Minutes Secretary)
Friday 26 June 2020