

THE MIDDLE GAME

Volume 1, Issue 25

November 2006

SIGNED, BUT WAS IT SEALED?

My proclamation in the last newsletter that the MCCU/ECF membership scheme was up & running was made believing that everything was in place, the ECF Board does not agree.

I am sorry that I have turned away a number of membership applications, and that several players who wanted ECF membership for events that were up & coming have had to decide either join as direct members, or to pay higher entry fees.

To find out why, see the MCCU GM report & update on what has happened since then.

BCF/ECF AGM's Bristol 26th October

The BCF's AGM only cause for concern was whether it was quorate. The business passed through very quickly, once it had been explained that the BCF had traded until October 2005, being a holding company since that date.

The ECF's AGM was a horse of a totally different colour.

Matters proceeded normally with most of the Directors and officers reports being accepted without controversy.

The President indicated that progress had been made in gaining recognition of chess as a sport and being accepted as eligible for charitable status. The possibility of chess becoming part of the London Olympics in some way was also being explored with some promising contacts made.

The CEO's report echoed this progress, it also highlighted the additional work undertaken by the office in the last year, and the uncertainty on finances created by the EGM decision relating to waiver of game fee for Direct members. He thanked Cyril Johnson for taking on the role of Acting CEO during his illness.

The Home Director was quizzed on the matter of some perceived grading anomalies, something not actually referred to in his report, research is apparently in progress. Essentially the concern is

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QUIZ TIME

Chess has played a significant role in movies and in the lives of actors over the past century.

Try this test of your chess movie knowledge:

1. What famous 1963 movie opened with a chess position from a game played in 1960 between Boris Spassky and David Bronstein?
2. In the same movie, what reason did Spassky give as to why two white pawns were purposely omitted from d4 and c5 in the movie version of the real-life game?
3. What 2000 movie, based a book by Vladimir Nabokov, starred John Turturro?
4. Name the actor who became an expert level chess player in his youth and took on all comers for a dime a game at a chess stall on Coney Island, and in 1999, was named the greatest film legend of all time by the American Film Institute.
5. In the *Lord of the Rings*, which main actor fancied himself a good chess player, but kept losing on the set to his scale double?
6. In the boxing scene in *Ocean's Eleven*, name the two heavyweight fighters, who are both chess enthusiasts.
7. In the 1996 movie *Independence Day* who portrayed the father and son characters who were introduced playing chess in the park?
8. Who was Hollywood's strongest chess player (Clue: A famous movie director)?
9. What actor from the television series, *Saved by the Bell*, produced an introductory chess video with 1995 Colorado State Champion, David Glikzman?
10. In the wizard's chess scene with the giant stone chess pieces in the 2001 movie *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, what serious chess error was made when the movie was edited?
11. What piece did Hermione play in the chess game in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*?
12. In the 1994 movie *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, what real-life chess player was incorrectly portrayed as a grandmaster in Washington Square Park?
13. In *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, famous chess teacher Bruce Pandolfini was portrayed by Ben Kingsley. The real Bruce Pandolfini made a cameo appearance in the one of the scenes in the park. What did he say to Kingsley?
14. In the 1968 movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, what did HAL say to Frank after beating him at chess?
15. What is the name of the 1975 Gene Hackman movie where the diagrammed position occurred? (Clue: Solving the chess position with black to move and mate in four suggests the name of the movie.)

See page 6 for an article about actors & actresses who didn't simply act out chess on the screen, but played chess off screen.

The answers to this quiz are on the same page

that some aspect of the current system, as yet not identified, is leading to a grading "drift". The meeting voted that some form of public forum on the matter should be available.

The Junior Chess report outlined the events held and explained that uncertainty about when, where, or even whether individual Junior World Championships would be held, had led to double numbers being sent to the European event.

The outgoing International Director lamented the loss of Jessie Gilbert, provided a summary of the International results and thanked the ECF office and assistance given by Peter Wells, David Norwood, Brian Smith & Allan Beardworth. He also stressed the importance of finding new sponsorship for the England teams.

The outgoing Marketing Director outlined the need to expand the directorate so that specific roles could be assigned to managers. Sponsorship and publicity are 2 very different areas, requiring different skills. Sponsorship seeking could be subject to incentives for income generated.

The Non-Executive Directors felt that Council had missed the opportunity to streamline the Organisation by insisting on replication of the old BCF set up. They felt that this has led to unnecessary friction between the Board and Council. The Board is constrained by the structure and cannot operate in the same way as a Board in the commercial world. The concept of the Board being given broad direction by Council and being left to "get on with things" has not been embraced and has led to both sides getting bogged down with procedural issues.

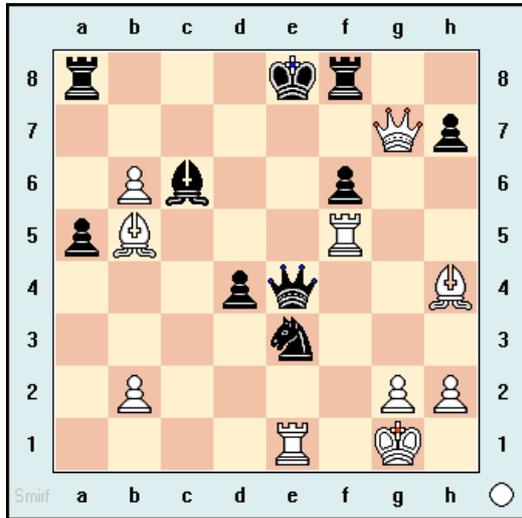
It had been decided by the chairman that, for the elections, only 5 minutes were to be allowed for questions of candidates, with no opportunity given to make a short statement. The ability to answer those questions off the cuff was of varying quality.

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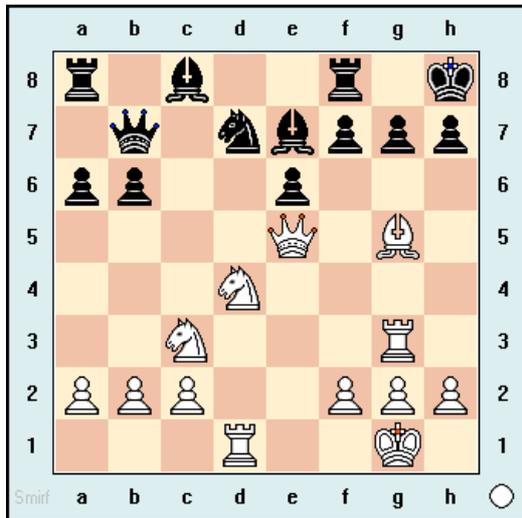
POSITIONAL PUZZLES

all the positions are from David Bronstein's games

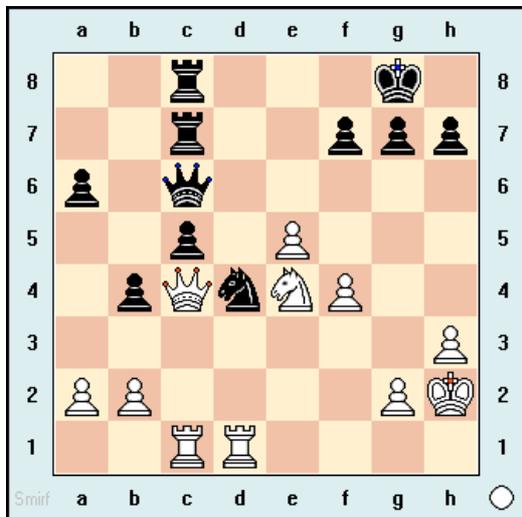
a) White Mates in 3



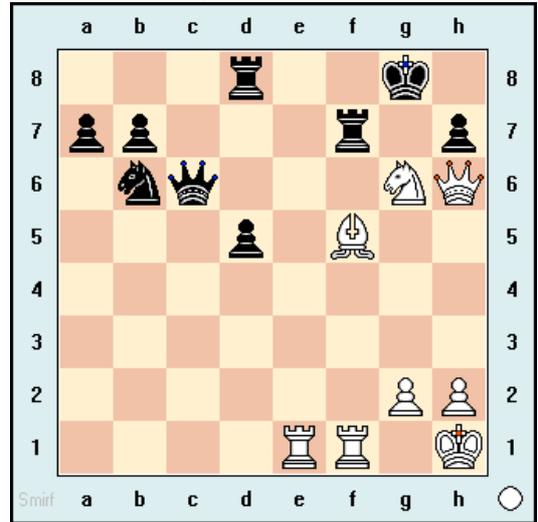
b) White Mates in 6



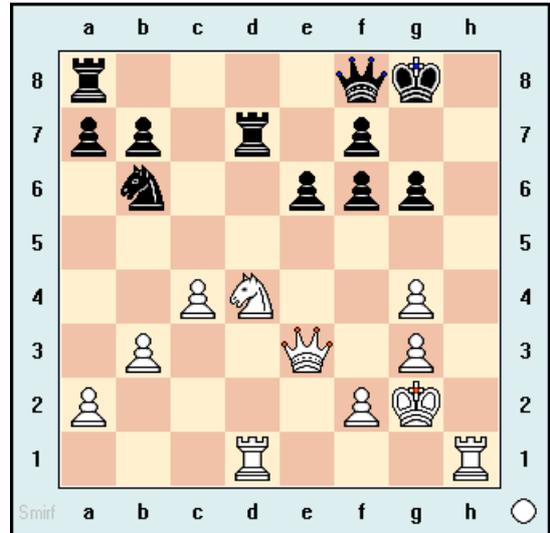
c) White to move & win



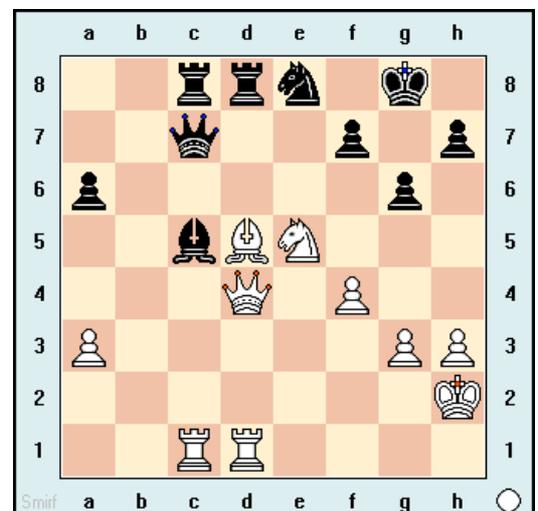
d) White to move & win



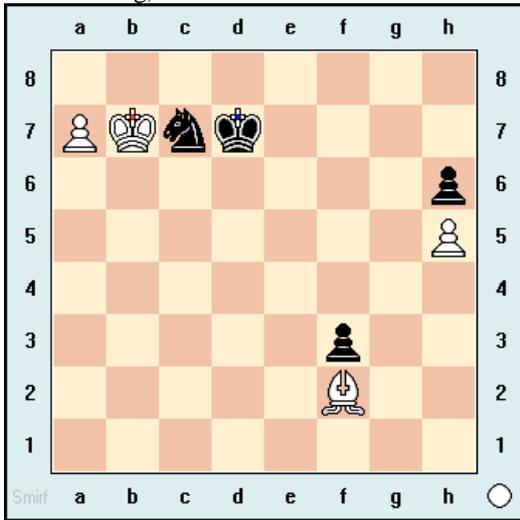
e) White Mates in 8



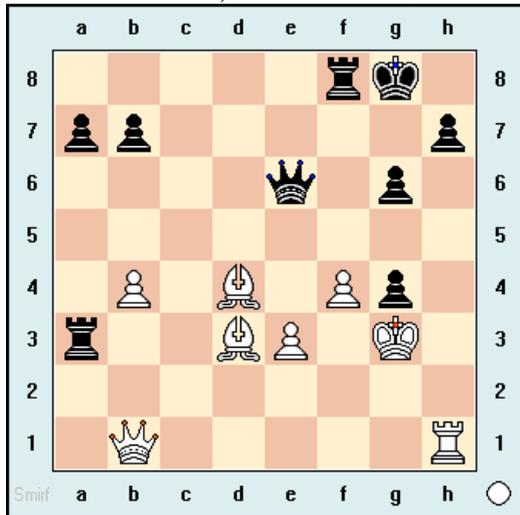
f) White to move & win



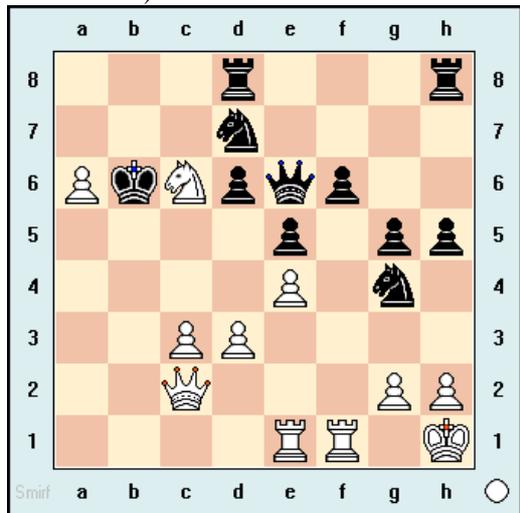
g) White to move & win



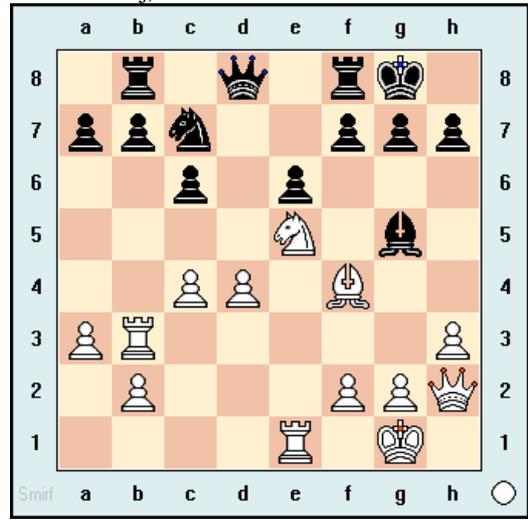
h) White Mates in 5



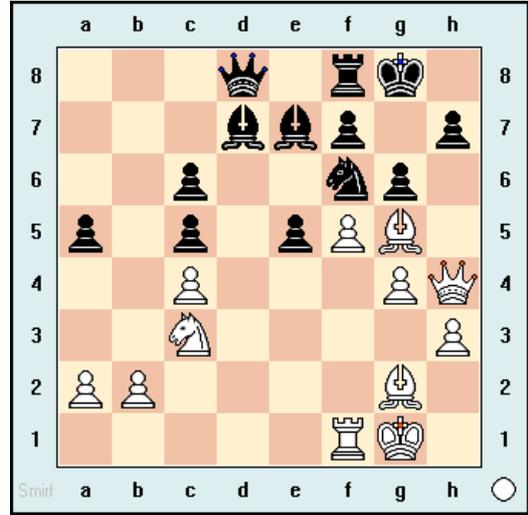
i) White to move & win



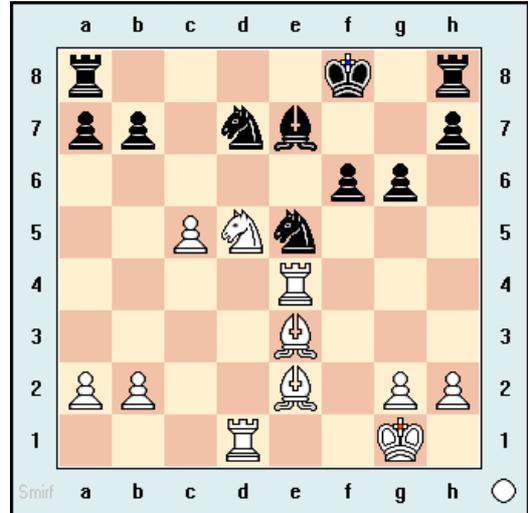
j) White to move & win



k) White to move & win



l) White Mates in 5



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The number of postal votes also meant that a significant number of delegates voted only on the basis of the written statements sent out with the AGM papers, or in some cases in the absence of any statement from the candidate.

After the counting and recounting, the following were elected:

President & FIDE Delegate:	Gerry Walsh
CEO:	Martin Regan
Finance:	Robert Richmond
Home Chess	Vacant
Junior Chess	Claire Summerscale
International Chess	Peter Sowray
Marketing	Peter Wilson
Non-execs	Mike Truran
	John Wickham

The vacancy in Home Chess was caused by the late withdrawal of Sean Hewitt, the only candidate.

The election for the CEO post was extremely close with a mere 3 votes separating Martin Regan & Roy Hepinstall. The victor conceded that had his opponent actually been present at the meeting, the result would have been different. Unfortunately Roy had lost a close relative, and family quite rightly came before the ECF.

One expected contest did not materialise, with Geoff Steele withdrawing from the Finance post, leaving Robert Richmond unopposed.

The most contentious motion proved to be that which the Board was instructed to bring forward by the EGM that of remitting the Game Fee for those games played by Direct and other individual members whose existing membership predated the EGM. Robert Richmond argued that this would result in a loss of revenue for the ECF, the previous board had been aware of this, but had taken the line that the wishes of the EGM should be adhered to. After weighing the cost implications against the perceived obligations, the meeting decided to remit the decision to the April Finance Council Meeting.

Issues have arisen since the AGM relating to this U-turn, as a number of Organisations had arranged their finances based on no game fee being due from any ECF member. The new CEO found himself with protests from a number of quarters.

Certain factions in Essex & Kent had put forward an amendment to the County Championship rules, so that the Director of Home Chess had the option to have more than 1 venue for the Finals. They did not find general support for this proposal and thus the motion was lost.

The South and West had submitted a paper proposing that game fee payers to receive the higher levels of prompt payment discount available under the Membership scheme; to have game fee frozen at current levels, in the same way as had been agreed for the Basic Member fee; and that for any future increases the same % be applied to Membership & Game Fee.

Discussions also took place on whether the Council should only meet in a central venue near a major rail terminus, excluding Stoke on Trent. The AGM location of Bristol was not the best of locations for travel for many delegates, particularly as there was engineering work on the rail line between Birmingham and Gloucester. There were arguments both that all meetings should be in the Midlands, and that Birmingham & London should be used as these have the best range of rail options. It was agreed to leave this until the Finance Council Meeting.

EMAIL PROBLEMS

Unfortunately our webmaster is still awaiting his Internet connection at home. As a result he is still accessing his mail and updating the website using other facilities. As you will appreciate this is a little limiting at the moment.

The MCCU county team controller Neil Beasley has had a sick computer and no access to his email. Sorry if you have been expecting a reply from him that hasn't materialised. He is now up & running again, but obviously has something of a backlog.

ACTING THE PART

Chess has featured in a number of films. It would be easy to presume that all of those chess scenes had to be memorised in the same way as the dialogue. Whilst that might be true in some cases, there are quite a few people in the film industry who are keen chess players.

Perhaps the keenest of them all was Humphrey Bogart, as a struggling young actor he supplemented his income by chess hustling up and down Broadway. Even when his acting success meant he no longer needed the additional funds, he couldn't resist hustling around Hollywood, but for much larger wagers. He beat Sam Reshevsky in a simul. He is reputed to have rated his friends on their chess prowess and ability to hold liquor. The latter being something he was also adept at.

He was a particularly poor loser & having suffered a string of defeats at the hand of top Hollywood restaurateur Mike Romanov, he challenged him to a telephone match. Romanov was stunned when he was beaten in 20 moves; little did he know that Herman Steiner US Champion was sitting at Bogart's side.

John Wayne was another poor loser. He played a series of games against a rather less famous actor William Windom. The latter actually had a US rating of around 1600. Wayne, having suffered his sixth consecutive loss in the series, took his ire out on the board & pieces & swept them all from the table. Windom is said to have retrieved them, but been unable to locate 2 of the pieces. he kept the incomplete set as a souvenir.

George Saunders and Zsa Zsa Gabor are said to have played on their honeymoon. According to Saunders in his biography "for want of better things to do"

Another Hollywood lady Greta Scacchi played Matthew Sadler in a celebrity simul. Granted she had a little help from the then British Ladies

champion Shelia Jackson.

Whilst filming "A Passage to India" on location, Nigel Havers decided to teach chess to some local children. Much to his chagrin, they picked up the game so well, that towards the end of filming they were beating him easily.

Marlon Brando was another actor who liked to use some of his waiting time on film sets playing chess. During the filming of Julius Caesar he made it a condition of doing an interview with a reporter, that they played chess. He was soundly beaten by the reporter & commented " That was the worst interview I ever gave".

The claim to be the strongest player can probably be made by Henry Darrow (remember the "High Chaparral", Darrow was Manolito). He drew with Spassky in a simul and won a celebrity tournament in Mexico. The runner up in that event Jesse Vint (Little Big Man) is said to have jumped into the swimming pool on site, fully clothed, having lost a crucial last round game.

QUIZ

Answers

1. The James Bond movie *From Russia with Love*
2. The movie producers were afraid they would be sued if they used the actual chess position. It is widely known today that you cannot copyright chess positions.
3. *The Luzhin Defense*
4. Humphrey Bogart
5. Sean Austin (Sam)
6. Lennox Lewis and Vladimir Klitschko
7. Judd Hirsch and Jeff Goldblum
8. Stanley Kubrick
9. Dustin Diamond
10. When Harry (a bishop) moves to c5 and announces checkmate, it isn't checkmate. The white queen can interpose on e3.
11. The black rook that started the game on a8.
12. International Master Kamran Shirazi
13. "Young Fischer."
14. "Thank you for a very enjoyable game."
15. Solution: 1 . . . Qxh2+! 2.Kxh2 Ng4+ 3.Kg1 Nh3+ 4.Kf1 Nh2 mate - from *Knight Moves*

MCCU HALF-YEAR MEETING

The meeting took place at Erdington Conservative Club in Erdington 19th November. It was once again a quorate meeting. It being the start of the main chess season reports from officers were in the main brief and uncontroversial.

At the time of the AGM Cyril Johnson was covering 2 ECF posts and was unwilling to stand for re-election as Events Director. As that situation changed with the ECF AGM, Cyril was available to assist the MCCU. The meeting agreed that he take up the Events post again.

The CEO proposed that a sub-committee be set up to produce a new draft constitution. A similar proposal had been made a year ago, and that meeting had agreed to consult, then set up a committee, which would take account of the views received. However, little feedback had been received, so the CEO suggested that the production of a draft might stimulate discussion. The meeting concurred and further agreed that the sub-committee should consist of the CEO, Finance Director and Gordon Christie as a Non-Executive Director.

There have been instances where team captains have only been personally made aware of the fact that the opposing team is conceding a match at the 11th hour, even later than that, or not at all; but the opposing captain had thought a message had been left which they would have received earlier. A new clause was agreed for the County Team Rules. This stipulates that a team captain must speak to his /her opposite number in person & not simply leave messages, if they cannot contact the captain they must speak to another officer of that county. If they fail to do so a fine of up to £50 may be imposed. This echoes the ECF County rules.

There was discussion on the county teams events. The number of team withdrawals, postponed matches & defaulted boards suggests that

captains are finding it difficult to raise teams. It was pointed out that many counties are trying to run more teams than in the past, with a smaller pool of players. Longer working hours, including Saturday working seem to have returned for many. Should we consider reducing all but the Open event to 12 a side, and should we also consider suggesting this as a motion for consideration at ECF level. It was agreed that county captains and players be consulted for their views (see item on page 15)

The contentious business of the GM was the ECF Board's rejection of the MCCU application to operate as an ECF Membership Organisation.

Discussions about an intended ECF Membership Scheme to be made available to Constituent Units, Counties & Leagues began at the MCCU AGM, held a week before the ECF EGM of June 24th.

The MCCU delegates present were not in favour of the scheme as it stood because of its' mandatory element, but were in favour of a voluntary scheme, and were in favour of the MCCU becoming involved with a voluntary scheme.

The ECF EGM voted for a voluntary scheme & I announced at that meeting that the MCCU had voted to run the scheme in those circumstances.

Subsequent ECF Board meetings considered a draft Membership Agreement. It was my understanding that a Board meeting in mid September was to have approved those Organisations who wished to operate the scheme, and was expecting to receive the necessary documentation very shortly after that. Unfortunately Cyril was unable to attend that Board meeting due to illness and even he had difficulty in finding out what had transpired at the meeting. 2 weeks after the meeting no documentation had turned up.

I complained to the ECF Board about the lack of urgency in receiving paperwork & suggested that

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in view of their delays the deadline for the 10% maximum discount should be amended. The consensus on the discount deadline was that it could not be changed as the date appeared as part of the EGM motion that was passed. I did receive an ECF Agreement to sign up for the MCCU to operate as a Membership Organisation (MO) shortly after. I also received an allocation of a batch of membership numbers & the spreadsheet template to be completed & relayed to the office as people signed up. The MCCU Board were all happy with that agreement so I signed it. As far as I was aware, having signed and returned it, my understanding was that it would be signed at the ECF office & a copy returned. On that basis I announced that the MCCU scheme was live.

Unfortunately a few individuals suddenly decided there were some potential issues. I spoke to some of the parties raising the issues and sent what I considered to be a reason argument to the ECF acting CEO.

Questions were raised as to

- a) whether a part of an Organisation can have a Membership Agreement (MO), if the main Organisation is also an MO; and
- b) whether Manchester as a Constituent Unit can be included the Membership Agreement of another Constituent Unit, the MCCU, despite the fact that it is affiliated to it.

The “old” ECF Board accepted that a) was not a problem but failed to come to a consensus on b) before the ECF AGM.

The situation was then complicated by the fact that the “new” ECF Board was of a rather different make up to the “old”. I brought the new CEO Martin Regan up to date on the situation and he appeared to agree with my arguments that the “Manchester” issues were not the stumbling block that some members of the “old” Board perceived them to be.

However, issues around “best endeavours” to sign

up members were then raised by Robert Richmond

“There is a more fundamental problem with the MCCU proposal. The minimum obligation on Counties is to circulate details to their members, with the predictable outcome of a modest take up. It is hard to see any meaningful difference between sending Julie £10 for Basic membership, with league Game Fee rebated and £16 to the office for Standard Membership and no rebate. This undermines Standard Membership. To repeat the point made above Basic Membership is a discounted rate only justified by significantly higher levels of take up. A minimum condition for meeting the “best endeavours” requirement of the membership agreement must be something like the approach taken in Leics, where clubs can deduct £6.30 from their league fees for each DM, with presumably a corresponding deduction from the basic club subscription.”

In reply I asserted that -

“Robert talks about the league fee discount Leics are offering their members, in addition to simply circulating them with membership info, as a minimum extra. I don't really feel Robert has thought about his suggestion properly. The MCCU does not run a league, so this route is not open to it. It envisaged that counties would/will be given reductions of game fee for ECF members playing in county matches. The MCCU only runs inter-county team events at the moment, so this is the only potential area where we can offer any financial rewards for membership. A Union is in a completely different position to a county running a league. Sorry, but I feel Robert is doing the equivalent of comparing apples with oranges.”

Robert suggests there is no difference between sending £10 to me, or £16 to the ECF office, in my view there is. The MCCU have given publicity to the scheme through its' Website, Newsletter & email Newsgroup. I feel that we have covered the arguments put forward by various players about the pros & cons in more detail than anything the ECF has circulated. We have offered practical solutions to the budgeting issues raised by leagues, something the ECF has not touched upon.”

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The reply I received included the following –

“The NCCU, like the MCCU, runs no leagues and controls no congresses, yet using "best endeavours" or rather using O Rourke and his band of helpers it signed up 1700 people. It did so by great personal effort, signing up all the congress organisers and even signing up chess equipment suppliers to offer discounts to members.

I am not suggesting that every Union or MO will have an O Rourke and Cole to hand, of course not. But if a decision to proceed nationally is taken on the basis of a pilot, then it is wise to try and ensure that the conditions and efforts prevailing in the pilot at the time are replicated. Alas, they will not be and I do not see a way at present that the MO schemes will do anything but financially damage the ECF.”

My response included the following –

“I feel that making comparisons between the NCCU pilot, which was the brainchild of that Organisation, and had a significant run up period in which to do the kind of things you mention, and the MCCU looking to run a scheme which was only voted on in principle 4 mths ago, is another example of comparing apples with oranges!

Are you/Robert saying in effect that MO status should only be granted to an Organisation where this would be likely to produce more income than game fee? If so, then equity has immediately gone out of the window.

Had not the Manchester issues been raised very belatedly, I believe the MCCU would have been fully signed up before the ECF AGM. The new ECF Board would have had to live with the consequences of that.”

I also pointed out that most of the Midlands Congresses are part of the ECF Grand Prix, which commits them to giving discounts to ECF members.

I received no reply.

Following the ECF Board meeting I received the following -

“The MCCU application was turned down by the board.

Nothing to do with Manchester, but as I suspected because of "best endeavours". This has a pretty strong legal definition and was seen by Council as one step down from mandatory. While you were obviously going to try to sign up members, this was not seen as sufficient.

If a union is to run such a discount scheme then it has to have most, if not all, of its counties on board, and deliver the same type of numbers as the NCCU did - if not then the finances just do not stack up.”

I asked for clarification on the Boards interpretation of “best endeavours”

“You state that "best endeavours" has a pretty strong legal definition but do not indicate what that is, as I am not aware of any such legal definition I would appreciate some indication of what the Board believes that definition to be.

You state that the Council meeting saw "best endeavours" as one step down from mandatory - I was at the Council meeting concerned, the minutes do not record any discussion on the interpretation of "best endeavours" and I do not recall there being any. My understanding also is that there was no specific discussion on the precise meaning of this term at the Board Meeting pre-EGM.

You indicate that you believe all or most of the MCCU counties needed to be on board. No one from the Board actually asked me about this. Whilst it is true that a number of counties voted not to operate the scheme directly, i.e. not to give game fee waivers directly, this was essentially because of the financial issues around dealing with revising fees etc. that had already been set. The MCCU scheme would have provided a means of signing up players without Counties/leagues having to touch their existing financial arrangements.

I therefore feel that the Board made some assumptions about the MCCU which were not based on fact.”

The reply I receive quoted legal cases where terms such as “to take all those steps in their power which are capable of producing the desired results “ and “no stone should be left unturned” and asserted that it was this legal interpretation that the ECF Board must use.

The MCCU GM felt that the Union could not be deemed by the ECF to have failed to meet the “best endeavours” criteria in the agreement, as

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such an agreement between the 2 bodies did not exist, having not been signed by both parties.

The comment was also made that “best endeavours” cannot not be judged on actual or perceived outcomes, using “best endeavours” whatever you interpret that to mean, is no guarantee that the outcome will be what is desired.

The meeting agreed that the fact that some MO applicants who had been “signed up” had been dealt with by the “old” ECF, and the MCCU application dealt with by the “new” Board, means that our application has been dealt with using different criteria. One of the prime considerations of the “new” Board appears to have been their differing financial view of the current scheme. The MCCU has therefore not been dealt with equitably compared to the other applicants. The current basic membership fee was not a consideration with the other applicants; it should not have been with the MCCU application. Whether the current ECF Board regards the membership fee as being too low should be treated as a separate issue.

The meeting agreed that a strong protest should be registered with the ECF Board.

UPDATE ON MCCU/ECF MEMBERSHIP

So, what has happened since the MCCU GM? You should already have seen the text of what was sent to the ECF CEO as a separate circulation if you are a member of the MCCU newsgroup or your club contact from that group has made it available. I also asked for it to be posted on the MCCU website as a separate item.

Following the GM I was talking to another chess player about the situation, they suggested that there may be an issue other than “best endeavours”, around the sending & signing of the agreement. In effect the suggestion is that the sending of the agreement etc constitutes an offer, the signing & return of the agreement accepted the offer, therefore a contract exists. This was

checked out with others more in the know and confirmed. As a result this was added as a matter for consideration by the ECF CEO/Board.

I have received a response from the CEO, which does finally acknowledge that the prime reason for not wanting an MCCU membership scheme was/is financial.

Whilst refuting my assertion that different considerations had been applied to the MCCU the CEO goes on to contradict his own claim

“From the moment that Robert’s report was finalised, I have had two applications to consider. The same considerations applied to both. The decision on Leicestershire was taken before the report was finalised”

Clearly Leicestershire was not considered using the same criteria as the MCCU. In addition Yorkshire are operating a voluntary scheme, which was dealt with by the “old” Board. Thus we appear to have 4 Organisations with voluntary schemes to which 3 different sets of criteria have been applied.

Whilst a response to the “agreement” issue was included refuting the existence of any contract, it is based on an incorrect time-line of events.

I am currently seeking further advice & will be consulting the rest of the MCCU Board before responding.

If you are not a member of the MCCU newsgroup and wish to be added to it, you only have to email me juliedjohnson@yahoo.com . Emails from this group do not go out with members’ addresses shown, nor do they include large attachments & unlike some chess groups you will receive large numbers of emails. I have to approve the sending of any mail through the group, so you won’t get any junk mail from other sources. The group is the best way to keep up to date with developments; you can also provide feedback and views to me through the group, or directly to my email address above.

CHESS CHAMPIONS



David Ionovich Bronstein can claim to be the player who came closest to winning the world championship without actually doing so. His 1951 match against defending champion Mikhail Botvinnik finished as a 12 all draw. FIDE rules meant that the champion had to actually lose to relinquish his crown, so Botvinnik held onto his title by the skin of his teeth.

Born in Belaya Tserkov near Kiev in the Ukraine on Feb 19th 1924, it was his grandfather who introduced him to both chess and draughts as a 6yr old. A mere 10 years later he had become recognised as one of the best young players in the USSR and was awarded the Russian Master title. 8 years later in 1948 he became joint USSR Champion with Alexander Kotov, retaining a share of the title the following year, this time with Vasily Smyslov. 1948 was also an important year for other reasons, winning the Saltsjobaden Interzonal marked his first international success. This qualified him for the Candidates Tournament of 1950 that took place in Budapest. The event produced a tie for first place between Bronstein and Isaac Boleslavskaya. Bronstein won a play-off held in Moscow. The 2 players were in fact the best of friends, with Bronstein marrying his friend's daughter Tatiana.

He faltered in the next two USSR championships, coming equal 6th after Keres and Geller in the Zonal in 1951, and equal 7th after Botvinnik and Taimanov in 1952, but he was seeded into the Zurich/Neuhausen Candidates 1953 anyway, where

he came equal 2nd with Keres and Reshevsky after Smyslov. At the next Interzonal at Goteborg in 1955, he came 1st again, but could only manage equal 3rd after Smyslov and Keres at the Amsterdam Candidates 1956. He continued to have good results in the USSR championships: equal 2nd with Keres after Tal ahead of Spassky and Petrosian in 1957, and 3rd after Tal and Petrosian ahead of Spassky in the Zonal at Riga 1958. Bronstein's style of play, and in particular his use of the King's Indian Defence had become so popular that admirers such as Tal Gligoric and Fischer had sprung up, and were outdoing their inspirer. Tal and Gligoric headed the list of prizewinners at Portoroz Interzonal 1958, but Bronstein had to settle for equal 7th after a last round loss against a tailender. He came equal 12th in the next three Soviet championships, thus missing even the next interzonal. By 1964, he had recovered his form, and managed to take equal 2nd with Stein after Spassky in Moscow Zonal. He came 6th in the following Interzonal in Amsterdam 1964, good enough for a Candidates berth, but saw his place ceded to 7th Ivkov and 8th Portisch because of a rule limiting the number of qualifiers from one nation. He continued to play in the USSR championships and zonals for many years, and even made it to Petropolis Interzonal 1973, but his style was geared more to aesthetically pleasing games than results, and he found the young generation of combinational players hard to overcome. That said, he continued to play at the top level until the early 1990's.

Bronstein's playing style was somewhat different to that of the other Soviet Grandmasters of his era. He could be described as both creative and solid. He has been described by some as the last of the chess romantics, by others as having the swashbuckling style of the Morphy era. He was never afraid to try something new, but also played older lines. He looked for new ideas in old openings and breathed new life into the Kings Indian Defense, which was out of favour at the time, such that it became fashionable again in the 1950's. Much of the analysis done by Bronstein and his friend Boleslavsky has stood the test of time, and is referred to today by exponents of the opening.

Unlike some top players he had a wide repertoire of openings. A quirk of his was to play an opening to

Continued from previous page

suit the opponent, not that is one his opponent would favour, but for example to play the "English" against an English player.

Besides being a top competitor over the board, Bronstein is famous for being a fine author and a gracious, entertaining special guest at events for chess players of all levels. His book *Zurich International Chess Tournament 1953* is widely regarded as a classic and more recently released an entertaining collection of his games called *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* with Tom Furstenburg.

He is also a pioneer in other ways. He thought of such things as "Banter Chess", which is quite popular on the online chess servers. He and Mikhail Tal played a game in 1966 where they spoke aloud their thoughts to a crowd and also had it recorded on tape. The format of Banter chess varies these days, with both players describing their thought processes, in some cases in each other's hearing, in other cases with only the audience able to hear both sides. In some formats the "onlookers" are able to interact with them by asking questions. He also has conflicting views about such things as the title "World champion"... "The idea of a chess champion seems atavistic in general. In Art there mustn't be champions!" Here are a couple quotes about GM Bronstein.

"The younger generation of players think that modern chess began with such things as the Informator but players of my generation know that it started with Bronstein!"-Tigran Petrosian

"Bronstein was a key figure in chess (in the 1950's). Without him neither Tal, nor even Fischer, could have played such important roles in the history of chess"-Barcza

Euwe describes Bronstein's style, in his 2 book set on the middlegame "The Middlegame" like this, "His style is something of Alekhine (his pawn sacrifices and his instinct for breakthrough) but also something of Tartakower (the best move is not necessarily the strongest; preference may be given to a second-best move in order to confuse the opponent).

Event "Erevan"
Date "1975"
White "Bronstein, D "
Black "Beliavsky, A "

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Nc5 Qb6 6.g4 Bg6 7.f4 e6 8.Qe2 Be7 9.h4 h5 10.f5 exf5 11.g5 Nd7 12.Nb3 Qc7 13.Nh3 O-O-O 14.Bf4 Bd6 15.Qh2 Nf8 16.O-O-O Ne6 17.Bxd6 Rxd6 18.Bc4 Ne7 19.Nf4 Nxf4 20.Qxf4 Rdd8 21.Qxc7+ Kxc7 22.c3 Rhe8 23.Nc5 Nc8 24.Nd3 Nd6 25.Bb3 Re3 26.Nf4 Rde8 27.Rhg1 R8e7 28.Rdf1 Ne4 29.Bd1 Kd6 30.Bf3 c5 31.dxc5+ Kxc5 32.Ng2 Rd3 33.Nf4 Rd8 34.Rd1 Red7 35.Rxd7 Rxd7 36.Rd1 Rxd1+ 37.Kxd1 Nd6 38.Kc2 a5 39.a4 Kb6 40.Kd3 Kc7 41.Kd4 Nc8 42.b4 axb4 43.cxb4 Ne7 44.a5 f6 45.gxf6 gxf6 46.Kc5 Be8 47.b5 Kb8 48.b6 1-0

Event "Moscow"
Date "1961"
White "Bronstein, D"
Black "Geller, E"

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. a3 Bxc3+ 5. bxc3 O-O 6. f3 d5 7. cxd5 exd5 8. e3 Bf5 9. Ne2 Nbd7 10. Nf4 c5 11. Bd3 Bxd3 12. Qxd3 Re8 13. O-O Rc8 14. Rb1 Qa5 15. Rxb7 Nb6 16. g4 h6 17. h4 cxd4 18. g5 dxe3 19. gxf6 Rxc3 20. Qg6 fxe6 21. Rxe6 1-0

Here is one last game, played in 1997. This game won the brilliancy prize for the tournament. David was 73!

Event "Hoogeveen NED"
Date "1997"
White "Bronstein, D"
Black "Vedder, R"
Result "1-0"

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. g3 Bb7 5. Bg2 Bb4+ 6. Bd2 c5 7. dxc5 Bxc5 8. O-O O-O 9. Nc3 Ne4 10. Qc2 f5 11. Rad1 Nxd2 12. Rxd2 a6 13. a3 Qc7 14. Rfd1 Be7 15. Qb3 Rc8 16. c5 Bc6 17. cxb6 Qb7 18. Ne5 Bxg2 19. Rxd7 Bd5 20. R1xd5 Rxc3 21. Rd8+ Bf8 22. Rxf8+ Kxf8 23. Qb4+ Ke8 24. Rd8+ Kxd8 25. Qf8# 1-0

CIRCULAR CHESS

Here is another in our occasional series on other forms of chess. If you are still struggling with the concept of conventional chess on a square board, how about the idea of playing chess on a circular board?

This is not a modern variation of the game, in fact it may go back 1,000 years or more. There is evidence that Circular chess was known to the Bysantines. Al-Masudi a historian of the 8th Century included references to 6 different variants of chess, including Astrological Chess, Byzantine round chess, Circular Chess and Cylinder Chess.

Other surviving references to circular chess include the Cotton Library manuscript "Cleopatra B ix" which is held in the British Library and dates from the 18th century. A pamphlet from 1789 not only provides a diagram and describes the movement of the pieces, but also provides some comment on the game

The author wrote: "It will be found in playing that the power of the Castle is the double of that of the common game, and that of the Bishop only the half; the first having sixteen squares to range in, and the last only four.

"Other peculiarities may possibly be discovered by such as are curious to try it, and thus much may suffice as a clew."

This fits in with claims of a brief revival of the game in London around that time. It is also said that Calcutta was another enclave in which the game was played and where a significant number of boards were made. The inference was that the game was played using the same moves as square chess of the time. Bishops were elephants moving two squares diagonally. Pawns moved one square forward and the Queen (or General) was restricted to one diagonal move at a time.

The game died out and was revived as the result of a chance find a 19th Century book, "A History of England" was bought in a Lincoln bookshop by David Reynolds in 1982. He wasn't a chess player, indeed he had never had the slightest interest in the game. This book included a section on Medieval pastimes, with a brief reference to Circular chess.

For some inexplicable reason this piqued the curiosity of David. He started to wonder how it would work, and why it had died out. With nothing to go on apart from what was written in the book, David produced several cardboard versions of the board.

He took one these along to his local pub, the Burton Arms, West Parade, to show to drinking pal Rob Stevens, who was a keen chess player. They challenged each other to a game, and that was the start of the revival of Circular chess.

The production of the wooden board now used followed on from there. The board had an empty space in the centre; David felt it needed "something" in the middle to make the board attractive, and to mark the starting positions for black and white. Being a Lincoln man the City of Lincoln crest was the obvious choice, and led to it being referred to as the Lincoln board.



David didn't really know whether his board bore much resemblance to its Medieval and Bysantine forerunners. He was therefore quite surprised when he was shown a copy of the 1789 pamphlet with its sketch of a circular chessboard; it was very similar to his own design.

The game is played on a board with four concentric and chequered rings. The central area is out of bounds and is often used for the storage of captured pieces.

Opposing pieces face each at the north and south "poles" - like competitors poised at the starting line on an athletics track.

Unlike a track race, all pieces (except pawns) can move either clockwise or anti-clockwise. That makes circular chess a challenging game, because pieces can attack and defend in either direction, at the same time.

In other words, a piece that at first glance appears to be sitting "harmlessly" on one portion of the board can in be poised to strike in the opposite direction.

As far as moves are concerned, the principles are the same as in square chess. However, there is no Castling allowed, and the en-passant rule involving pawns does not apply

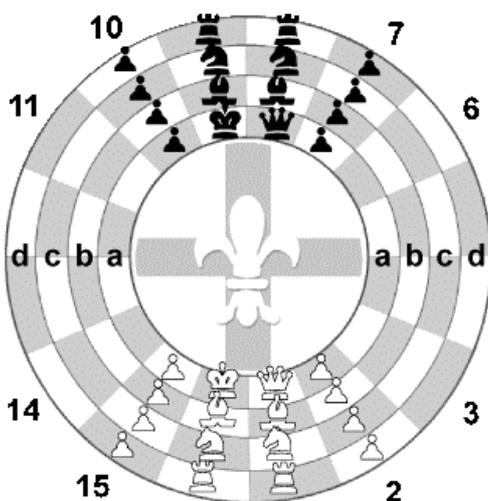
Therefore, the Rooks and the Queen are powerful pieces, which can sweep around the board and can dominate entire rings.

Bishops are limited up to four cells per move, but can catch out an unwary opponent on a curving diagonal.

Knights are powerful because they can effectively block off one side of the board.

A pawn which gets halfway around the board (i.e.: to the enemy K/Q line) is promoted.

The Starting Position



Pieces line up in R-K/Q-R order as per the square board, with pawns guarding a "back row" which effectively has been folded back on itself, creating four continuous ranks/rings.

The "promotion line" for the pawns is as per the square board (i.e.: they must move six spaces to the "back row").

The promotion lines and starting positions are designated by the vertical line of the cross of the City of Lincoln official civic crest.

Annotations are used to record games, with rings listed a-d and cells numbered 1-16.

The Queen

As in square chess, the Queen is a versatile and powerful piece that can move in any direction.

The Queen is restricted to a maximum of four cells on the curved diagonal, and from the inner to outer ranks.

She can sweep around the entire board - attacking and defending in both clockwise and anti-clockwise directions.

The King

The King moves one cell in any direction. There is no Castling.

The Rook

The Rooks, like the Queen, can make unrestricted sweeps around an entire ring in either direction.

Like the Queen, they can attack and defend in clockwise and anti-clockwise directions - simultaneously.

Rooks can also move between the inner and outer ranks.

They are strongest when they work with together or with the Queen on the same ring.

The Bishop

The Bishops operate on the curving diagonal, which can trap the unwary opponent.

The diagonals on the Lincoln Board are not always easy to spot, especially if a Bishop is placed on one of the cells on the inside rank.

Experienced players in the world circular chess tournament have come unstuck after failing to spot a "reversing bishop" - which can strike clockwise and anti-clockwise.

The Bishop is limited to a maximum of four cells per move, and can not "bounce" off the sides of the board.

The Knight

As in square chess, the Knights move two cells forwards, sideways or backwards and one cell at right angles.

As the Lincoln Board is confined to four ranks on each side, the Knights can work with one another or with other major pieces to block an attack on one side of the board.

As in square chess, they are capable of "leaping" over friendly and enemy pieces, and are useful for surprising opponents with forks, pincer attacks and defensive moves.

The Pawns

As in square chess, Pawns can jump one or two cells on their first move, and can be promoted to higher pieces by reaching the enemy's back line.

However, they are the only pieces that can not change direction on the circular Lincoln Board.

As in square chess, they take enemy pieces on the diagonal.

The World Circular Chess Championship rules prohibit Pawns from taking pieces using the en-passant manoeuvre.

The game gradually spread to other areas and led to the first World Championships being held in Lincoln in 1996. The event has been staged in & around Lincoln every year since.

The World Champions

- 2006 Herman Kok
- 2005 Michael Jones
- 2003-04 Francis Bowers
- 2002 David Howell
- 2001 Francis Bowers
- 2000 Herman Kok
- 1997-99 Francis Bowers
- 1996 Rob Stevens

The reigning champion is indeed the same Dutchman well known in conventional international chess circles. Other names on the champions list will also be familiar to many players for their involvement with "square" chess.

Anyone wanting to find out more about Circular chess can visit - www.circularchess.co.uk
The website of the Circular Chess Society.

COUNTY CHESS CONSULTATION

Are you a county team captain past or present? Do you play county chess? Do you not currently get the chance to play county chess because your county doesn't run a team covering your grading? Then I would like to hear from you.

It has been suggested that counties might find it easier to run teams at more of the grading levels than many do now, if there were 12 a side instead of 16 for the U175, U150 & U125 sides.

There are 2 distinct matters to consider –

- a) Do we just consider this for the MCCU stages?
- b) Do we put a motion up to ECF Council with a view to 12 a side at National stages?

A motion to the ECF would need to go to the April Council meeting, the October AGM is too late for a change to the 2007/8 competition. So we need to think about this sooner rather than later.

The NCCU already run their events as 12 a side and put out the extra 4 boards in the National stages, so in theory there is nothing to prevent the MCCU doing the same.

The WECA do not run their events over the grading bands used by the ECF at all, and have little competition for places in the Finals.

The EACU are the smallest Union with only a few teams, so again they do not have the same level of competition for places.

That said, it might be useful to know whether the ECF stages for 2007/8 are going to be 12 a side or 16 before the MCCU makes votes on the matter at it's AGM in June 2007.

It is quite clear from the make up of many county sides that the lower boards are often made up of players who are eligible for the team below. It is also clear that in some counties a whole group of players do not get the chance to play county chess, because they are in a grading band not covered by their county teams, and not covered by the lower boards for a higher team.

If your county does not run teams at particular grading bands, is it because it cannot raise a 16 board team? If so, could it raise a 12 board team?

Is the problem shortage of team captains? If so, would the prospect of raising 12 rather than 16 players persuade more people to step forward and run a team?

What do YOU think? Now is the chance to have your say. Please don't just sit back and leave the decision to a small number of people based on their view of the situation. Let the future reflect what grass roots players want and have YOUR say.

Contact the CEO at juliedjohnson@yahoo.com
or the Events Director at cyriljohnson@yahoo.co.uk
either on 0116 2609012
or the County Team Controller at neilbeasley@care4free.net
or on 01455 274663

MCCU COUNTY CONTROLLER VACANCY

Whilst we are on the subject of inter-county chess – This is Neil Beasley's last season as Controller. His post was advertised with a view to someone working with him this season & taking over the 2007/8 event. No one has come forward.

If anyone out there is interested please step forward. If you know of anyone who could fill this post, let me know, so that I can make contact.

The stark prospect is, no Controller, no county team competitions for 2007/8

POSITIONAL PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

- a) Bronstein vs Lowenfische, USSR, 1946
Re5+
- b) Bronstein vs Alexander Kotov, Moscow, 1946
Bh6
- c) Bronstein vs Andor Lilienthal, Moscow, 1944
Nd6
- d) Bronstein vs Iosif Rudakovsky, Moscow, 1945
Ne7+ Kh8 (if Rxe7 Qg5+) Nxc6 Rdf8 Ne5
- e) Bronstein vs Boris Ratner, Moscow, 1945
Nxe6 if fxe6 Rxd7 w/Qxe6+
- f) Bronstein vs Jaroslav Sajtar, Moscow, 1946
Rxc5 w/Qxc5 Bxf7+ & Rxd8
- g) Bronstein vs Grigori Levenfish, Leningrad, 1947
Bg3
- h) Bronstein vs Arnold Denker, New York, 1954
Rxb7 if Kxb7 Qh1+
- i) Bronstein vs Vasily Panov, Moscow, 1947
Rb1+ Kc5 (if Kxc6 Qa4+) d4+
- j) Bronstein vs Lajos Tipary, Budapest, 1949
Bxe5 w/Nd7
- k) Bronstein vs Arpad Vajda, Budapest, 1949
Ne4 if Nxe4 Bxe7 g5 Bxd8 gxf4 Bxf4 Nd2 Rd1
- l) Bronstein vs Vladas Mikenas, Moscow, 1949
Nc7 if Rc8 Bh6+ w/Rxd7

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“It has been said that man is distinguished from animal in that he buys more books than he can read. I should like to suggest that the inclusion of a few chess books would help to make the distinction unmistakable.”

Edward Lasker, 'The Adventure of Chess', 1949.

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