**MINUTES**

Annual General Meeting of the Sheffield & District Chess Association

Monday 5th  September 2011 Woodseats Social Club. 7.30 p.m.

 1. **Apologies** for absence were received from or on behalf of: John Mercy, Chris Shephard, Paul Bailey, Paul Fletcher, Ron Keenan, Peter Hempson and Paul Blackman.

 2. **Minutes** of the 2010 Annual General Meeting were read and approved as accurate.

3. **Matters arising**:

Sheffield Congress: Andy Hards reported success; 130+ entrants; winners local and visiting; three players secured entry to the British Championships; finances sound enough so it looked more than likely we’ll repeat. The Congress organising team – Andy, Steve Mann, Paul Bailey central, thanks to Bill Ward / Dave Latham et al - will look to a date in May best compatible with the ECF calendar. More juniors next time! and they’ll look at Mark Kirkham’s suggestion: online payment facility. General sustained applause for Andy, Steve and Paul: “a brilliant success as an event and as a social occasion...one of the best things done for chess in the area in years”. Dave urged folk to think now about entering next year: we could make this a central event, you strutt the stuff you’ve learned all year, show the progress you’ve made.

British Championship: “a fantastic event for spectators” (Jeremy Hamm); financially successful in an era of fewer free venues; 996 entrants, better than last year; “a festival of chess”. Regrets, that local publicity was lacking; if it returns, we do a bit more; though Andy Hards observed that the press had shown little interest: “like getting blood out of a stone”. Well done to all contributors and participants; Myles Edwards-Wright a standout performer.

 4. **Treasurer's Report** was read out. The accounts were approved; they show an overall loss of about £100, £1600 in the bank so no worries there.

 5. **Secretaries' Reports**.

General Secretary Dave Latham said he’d get the minutes and fixtures out; thanks to all who hadn’t caused grief; sorry to any who’d been inconvenienced by his lack of time for the job; his vote and a pint for anyone more competent ready to take over, an offer which fell flat on the night.

Phill Beckett: div 1: Nomads the class act, the oppo maybe flattered by the apparent closeness of their victory; relegation battle exciting, closely contested; the competition always sporting.

Div 4: SASCA held their nerve best in a tense finish; plenty of juniors got a go; the amicable spirit which enabled easy conflict resolution was appreciated. Note that those who want more matches are welcome to arrange friendlies and Jon Griffiths the grader has agreed that these can be graded if conducted according to the time limits and other rules of normal league competition.

Richardson Cup: Nomads had little difficulty retaining their crown; a strong Phoenix side won the Plate.

Summer League: Chesterfield commended on winning the first division; the second remains in the balance. Phill applauded the spirit which saw 14 turn out for the Rotherham-Nomads match.

Postal/ email / internet: Phill described numerous competitions and strong performances by our players, some against teams from all over the world. See the website for details: notably –

 White Rose 11/16 in the British Final, must be in with a shout of doing even better than 4th last time. 15/16 matches won, including revenge for the one loss, in Chess Mind’s International League. Two teams doing really well in the European postal League. Locally, Worksop and Nomads contested the Avison shield, the former winning. Commendation: Peter Hulse, qualified for the 15 player British Championship after an excellent result in the Challengers; the assembled 2200/2400s need to prepare for him now.

In the Sheffield Championship, Chris Shephard retained the title on tie break from Paul Fletcher; 20 competed.

Phill completing all these reports, President Mike Smith applauded his energy and enthusiasm; and himself read reports, based as he said on the league tables, for divisions two and three.

Div 2: Nomads B “walked away”; Nomads C edged Rotherham for second; University and Rotherham Juniors B relegated.

Div 3: Woodseats B, Worksop B just ahead of Phoenix B; Aughton B were a bit adrift; SASCA B just relegated after a play off.

Yorkshire League captains reports: Sheffield A ; second as last year; one draw, one loss, nine wins. Disaster, loss to York B; fantastic win v York A; the tale was that we didn’t match their consistent fielding of their strongest team. Jeremy looked to better coordinated activity, based on the captains meeting and, hopefully, lots of teams meeting and playing on one site (Woodseats).

Sheffield B: came third, +8 -3; two narrow losses to the eventually promoted teams; a few more strong players and we’d have gone up; well done especially Phill Beckett 5/6; Mike Hankinson 7/9; Alan McIntosh 7.5/10.

Sheffield D did well; stayed in the division, gave valuable experience to youngsters. So too Sheffield E, who stayed up very narrowly. Sheffield F did fine at home; struggled to get teams away; good experience for up and coming players and some drivers, helpers, players would be great.

Crabb Shield: Bill reported “another good one, thanks to Nomads for the venue”. Good turnout: Andrew Ledger and Jon Nelson thoroughly justified their billing; cracking performance by Oskar Hackner.

Grand Prix: going great; one event left, can anyone stop Farshad? Might have more events next year, without the British Championship in town.

Memorial Competitions: at The Horseshoe (Worksop), Monday 21st; in memoriam John Smith; and at The Harlequin, Mon 21st; to remember Phil Ford. All welcome.

Hope Valley changed the night and got a slightly disappointing turnout but a class act winner in Jonathan Arnott: details on website.

 6. **Presentation of Trophies**: the Summer League div 2 not being finished, and one or two trophies still needing returning, we presented what we could and will collect all for a mass engraving. Dave thanked all for the responsible attitude in keeping, returning; passed on the valuer’s tip not to overdo it with the polishing of silver, a soft metal. First presentation of the “new” Woodhouse as the Summer League trophy, and of the 2nd division trophy; thanks to Steve Mann and Geoff Frost.

 Div 1: Nomads A; Div 2: Nomads B; Div 3: Woodseats B; Div 4: SASCA C; Richardson: Nomads 1; finalists: Worksop 1. Plate (Sam Haystead Memorial): Phoenix 1; Individual Championship: CCW Shephard; vice-champion: P Fletcher. Summer League: Chesterfield A; 2nd division: Aughton or Wombwell at time of the meeting.

 7. **Election of Officers, Auditors & Match Captains**.

There were no contested elections and the team is as follows: President, Mike Smith. Vice Presidents as before, except for the late Ray Guest and Mick Burrell, requiescant in pace. General Secretary, Dave Latham. Treasurer, John Mercy. Auditors, Brian England and Tony Perry.

 Divisions 1, 4; Richardson and Plate; Summer league; postal / email / internet: Phill Beckett. Division 2 Tony Perry; Division 3 Steve Bracey. Note that later in the meeting Phil South agreed to control the new division 5. Sheffield captains: A – Jeremy Hamm. B – Alan McIntosh. D & E - Paul Blackman. F – Paul Bailey.

Sheffield Championship Controller; Paul Bailey. Webmaster and Bulletin Secretary (the executive to take soundings as to whether the bulletin, required in the rules, is still to the point): Peter Hulse.

Crabb and Gurnhill, Bill Ward. Hope Valley, John Fryer. Junior Chess Secretary, Ian Hemingway.

Thanks and appreciation were expressed to those who step down, and to those who continue.

Issues arising during the elections:

Many thanks to Paul Bailey for website work described as “inspiring, points the way to the future, a great gift to Sheffield Chess”. We welcomed his successor Peter Hulse, whose work with Woodseats is widely applauded; Peter called for thoughts as to the direction people wanted the website to take.

Ian Hemingway said that there was much that could be done in junior chess; a schools league; a jamboree; these things need people with the will and time to get them moving, as there’s much enthusiasm in schools once clubs start. The Chess in School and Communities national initiative looked like something that had taken root elsewhere (Jeremy) but left nothing touched in Sheffield (Ian).

 8. **Election of Chairman of the Executive**: Steve Mann, who hoped with improved health to get proactive, especially to help revive executive meetings; one was tentatively mooted to respond to the ECF’s meeting in October.

 9. **Election of members to serve on the Executive**: Mick Clark, Alan Coupe, Pete Swanson. Geoff Frost will take our best regards to Paul Blackman, offer him the fourth spot and take it himself should Paul decline.

 10. **Proposed amendments to the Constitution & Rules**. Note that, insufficient notice (30 days) having been given for these proposals, the President offered to refuse debate or vote on any or all the proposals should anyone present so wish. No objection being made, normal debating and voting procedures continued.

A: 20(b) All games in a match will be played using the same time control.

If analogue clocks are to be used then each player shall have 60 minutes, in which to make 30 moves. If the game has not been completed by black's 30th move, each player shall be granted a further 15 minutes in which to complete the game."

 If Fischer clocks are available and their use is acceptable to both captains, then players start the game with one hour on their clocks, with increments of 15 seconds added for every move.

This was debated, but failed on a vote. Obiter, some of the practices it had been designed to combat, e.g. declining draws to win lost positions on time, were – in different quarters - condemned and defended.

**B: Existing rules 25 to 28 to be renumbered as 26 to 29.**

**New rule 25**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **25.** | **Summer League.** | Rule modified |
|  | Normal Evening League rules will apply except as follows: |
|  | All divisions of the Summer League except possibly the lowest shall consist of six teams, each of which shall play two matches (home and away) with each other team. | 14 (b) |
|  | The lowest division of the Summer League shall be arranged to accommodate the varying number of teams from year to year; and shall consist of a minimum of five teams, and a maximum of ten teams. | 14 (c) |
|  | A team shall consist of 4 boards (or more if mutually agreed by both captains). | 14 (e), 14 (f) |
|  | Applications for election to the Summer League must be made to the General Secretary by 15 April in each year. Clubs with teams competing in different divisions shall register with the Association the names of the two strongest regular players for each team, except the team or teams in the lowest division. | 15 (b), 17 (a) |
|  | League matches shall take place from May to September inclusive. | 16 (b) |
|  | When a club has teams competing in the same division, the league matches between them must be completed by July 16th. | 16 (d) |
|  | If the lowest division comprises more than ten matches, the teams may by mutual consent agree to play one match for double points in place of home and away matches. | 16 (g) |
|  | Except as provided under Rule 17(c) and 25 (i), registration of players shall be subject to approval by the Executive. If the Executive is not scheduled to meet, the approval shall be by consultation between the Chair of Executive, General Secretary and the Summer League Secretary/Secretaries. | 17 (b) |
|  | Any player who plays two or more matches on either of the top two boards of any team shall be automatically registered for that team. | 17 (d) |
|  | Once a player has represented a club in the Summer League s/he is ineligible to represent another club in the Summer League in the same season unless officially transferred by the Executive. A player may however represent one club during the Summer season and a different club during the Winter season. | 18 (c) |
|  | In each division the team placed first shall hold the appropriate trophy until the end of the following season, and shall be entitled to promotion in the following season, to the next higher division, unless disqualified under Rule 15(e). | 23 (b) |
|  | The team finishing in the bottom position in each division shall be relegated in the following season to the next lower division unless there is a vacancy in their present division, in which case they may be considered for re-election. | 23 (c) |

Accepted, nem. con.

 C: 16(d): When a club has two teams competing in the same division, the league matches between them must be completed by 31st December.

Proposed: to delete the word “two”; accepted, nem con.

 11. **Approval of Clubs** seeking membership to the league: none.

 12. **Fixing of fees and subscriptions**: we agreed to John Mercy’s recommendation. No change.

 13. **Organisation of teams into Divisions**:

After debate and votes, the divisions will be as follows:

Division One: Nomads A, Chesterfield A, Woodseats A, Rotherham Juniors A, Barnsley A, Worksop A, Ecclesall A, Nomads B, Rotherham.

Division Two: Phoenix A, SASCA A, Nomads C, Aughton A, Stannington A, Wombwell, Clay Cross A, Woodseats B, Worksop B

Division Three: University of Sheffield, Phoenix B, Barnsley B, Ecclesall B, Chesterfield B, Darnall & Handsworth, SASCA B, Woodseats C, Stannington B

Division Four: Aughton B, SASCA C, Phoenix C, Clay Cross B, Barnsley C, Sheffield Deaf, Worksop C, Sheffield Hallam University, Nomads D

Division Five: Ecclesall C, Rotherham Juniors B, SASCA D, Nomads E, Stannington C, Woodseats D, SASCA E.

Welcome to new teams, all from existing clubs. Mark informed us that the University club is renamed “University of Sheffield” as above. A vote decided that teams in the fifth division will still play each other home and away, i.e. twice per season. Teams wanting more chess than this are urged to set up friendlies, which can be graded.

 14. **Any Other Business**: we voted a donation of £200 to the Sheffield Congress; and to buy a cupboard, suggested price £70, to store equipment for the Yorkshire League teams.

Yorkshire League: Jeremy Hamm presented on the Yorkshire Chess Association AGM. Some points:

1) ECF funding proposals: see item 15.

2) junior chess: talent out there, difficulties organising it;.

3) Yorkshire League: away teams will be white on odds.

4) Next year’s Sheffield Congress will select the Yorkshire champion!

15. AOB: the executive will consider the ECF Chief Executive’s proposals as detailed in the attached letter. Jeremy said that Jon Griffiths was arguing our corner well, we were interested in all views and one initial view was that the proposals didn’t arouse enthusiasm.

(letter from Andrew Farthing)....The ECF Board identified and implemented cost savings of about £40,000, but these alone are not sufficient to offset the full impact of the loss of the £60,000 grant.

My paper included proposals for changes to the funding of the ECF, based on two options: (1) A Membership Scheme at a flat rate of £18 for adults and £12 for juniors; (2) A modified version of the current combination of Game Fee and optional Membership, which would see the base rate of Game Fee rise to 70p.

On 16th April, the ECF Finance Council met to discuss the proposals. Following considerable discussion, the results of the members’ vote was as follows:

Option 1 (Membership Scheme) - 91 votes (54%)

Option 2 (Game Fee + Membership) - 71 votes (42%)

Neither of the above - 7 votes (4%) .....

.....In my original paper, I described a membership scheme based on a flat rate of £18 for adults, £12 for juniors, irrespective of the amount of chess played. The view was expressed by many that this was unfair on less active players, who were paying a relatively high amount for a few games.

The current thinking, therefore, is to establish different tiers of membership as follows:

*BRONZE – Eligibility for all graded events except congresses and FIDE-rated events;*

*SILVER – Eligibility for all graded events except FIDE-rated events;*

*GOLD – Eligibility for all graded and rated events.*

Players who only compete in graded league, club and county competitions would be covered by Bronze membership. Silver would cover those who play in congresses as well, but not FIDE-rated events. Gold would cover all types of event. As is currently the case, all English-registered players with an active FIDE rating will be required to be ECF members in order to retain their "active" status on the FIDE rating list.

Preliminary analysis of past activity suggests that 62% of adults (29% of juniors) would need Bronze membership only. Silver would apply to 28% of adults (67% of juniors). The comparable figures for Gold would be 10% (4%) respectively.

Preliminary analysis again suggests pricing for adults in the order of: Bronze £13; Silver £19; Gold £25. Junior membership fees would be about a third lower in each case. In other words, those who play in non-FIDE-rated congresses would pay £1 more than in the original £18 flat rate proposal; those who play only in league and club competitions – the group which caused most concern in the response to the original paper – would pay £5 less than envisaged.

|  |
| --- |
| It is also envisaged that there would be a *PLATINUM* membership tier, at a higher price, for those who wished to support the Federation as a patron. **A note about Game Fee** Given the vote at Council in April, my brief is to prepare detailed proposals for a membership scheme. If these do not obtain the necessary support in October, it is likely that some form of Game Fee would remain. As you will be aware, Game Fee is currently paid on all graded games, except for those played by ECF direct members in congresses and all games played by those who are part of a Membership Organisation (Basic and Basic Junior members). Outside Membership Organisations, players generally pay Game Fee through their league or match fees or through congress entry fees. In view of the need to close the budget gap created by the loss of the Government grant, Game Fee would have to increase further, which would have a knock-on effect on league fees, etc. **It should be stressed that, under a Membership scheme, no Game Fee will be payable, so league fees should be significantly reduced or even eliminated entirely, depending on local circumstances. Similarly, congress organisers will no longer need to include an element in their entry fees to cover Game Fee (i.e. about £3 for a typical weekend congress).** I appreciate that this is likely to be well understood, but it is important to be clear that, while a membership scheme will, on average, increase what individuals pay towards the ECF, this is also true of the alternative.” |