Surrey County Chess Association

a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital

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registered office 38 Glebe Road, Ashtead, Surrey KT21

Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting and Annual Finance and Annual League Composition Meetings

**27 AUGUST 2020**

Virtual meeting using Zoom from 7.00 pm.

Paul Shepherd (President) was in the Chair.

Attendees

**Nominated Members entitled to vote**:

**Ashtead**: Dan Rosen (also proxy for Bertie Barlow), Richard Jones

**Dorking**: Peter Lawrence (also proxy for Brian Skinner), Brian Skinner

**Epsom**: Marcus Gosling (also proxy for David Flewellen), Michael Wickham, David Flewellen

**Guildford**: Mike Gunn (also proxy for Trevor Jones, Phil Stimpson)

**Kingston**: John Foley, Alan Scrimgour

**Richmond**: Huw Williams

**South Norwood**: David Howes

**Streatham**: Richard Tillett

**Surbiton**: Paul Durrant

**Wallington**: Daniel Young

**Wimbledon**: Russell Granat

**Attendee entitled to a casting vote**: Paul Shepherd (Chairman)

**Attendees not entitled to vote**: Clive Frostick (Farnham & Guildford), David Sedgwick (Life Vice President),

Paul Shepherd provided advice about the use of Zoom during the meeting including how to show a hand-vote and mute/unmute. Information about the Virtual Meeting Protocol had been provided in the Agenda under Appendix B

**Extraordinary General Meeting**

**1. Apologies for absence**

Gordon Rennie

**2.** **Bye-Law amendment proposals to accommodate 4-digit ECF grading, time dependent Bye-Laws (for the 20-21 season) and provision for separate online competitions (see Appendix A)**

Paul Shepherd provided an introduction to the proposal. He explained that due to COVID–19 it is not possible to meet some of the deadlines specified in the By Laws. Some will need to be changed and he referred to Appendix A. He then invited Dan Rosen to provide an explanation of the changes.

Dan Rosen said that he assumed that everyone had access to the Bye Laws and that the proposed changes were technical rather than political. The transition to 4-digit grades will probably happen later this year but there is a need to be ready preferably before over the board chess resumes. The changes are based on ECF proposals and the figures have been rounded to make them look sensible. It was more important to understand the principles rather than the numbers. This was about a conversion process and not an opportunity to debate particular items.

Full details of the proposals is provided in Appendix A.

Each of the four different proposals will now be voted on individually.

1.The proposal was passed 14 – 1.

2. Monthly Grades. The Bye Laws do specify what grading list to use but Bye Law 2.6 will be changed as specified in Appendix A. Mike Gunn enquired what grading list will be used for the Individual Tournaments? Dan Rosen replied that either the March or April grades would be used,depending on the definition of the start date included in the rules for that competition. The proposal was passed nem.con.

3. Dan Rosen explained why amendments were necessary to accommodate online competitions. In response to a question by David Sedgwick, Paul Shepherd clarified that as the online competitions will be organised by the SCCA they are official but also friendly. More information will be provided under the specific agenda item. The proposal was approved nem.con.

4. The amendments to deadlines arising from COVID–19 are necessary as no over the board chess is currently being played in any SCCA competition. Dan Rosen described the proposed changes.

Bye Law 1.1: the SCCA is not in a position to debate fees for club competitions with no over the board chess so the dates for the invoicing and collection of membership fees need to be postponed.

Bye Law 2.0: this is a new Bye Law to accommodate online club competitions.

Bye Law 3.1.2 defers the deadline for entries by reference to the resumption of the Annual League Composition Meeting. (Dan Rosen clarified that the proposal for Bye Law 3.1.2 applied only to the first reference to the Annual League Composition Meeting.)

Bye Law 3.2.2 removes the requirement for re-nominations in respect of the 20-21 season in view of its short duration.

Bye Law 3.4: the proposed changes defer the dates 1 October and 7 September to 3 weeks after the Annual League Composition Meeting and 30 April to 30 June.

Bye Law 3.6:1 May is changed to 1 June and 28 days to 21 days

David Sedgwick enquired whether if there might be no 2020/21 season should there not be some allowance for finishing the 2019/20 season. Dan Rosen explained that they cannot change rules for that season as it had already commenced, and that season could be completed anyway without any rule change.

The above proposal was voted on en bloc and passed nem.con.

The adjournment of the meeting was then agreed nem.con.

**Annual Finance Meeting**

**1.Apologies for Absence**

Gordon Rennie

**2.** Paul Shepherd said that the Board had considered the possibility that there may be no over the board chess for the 2020/21 season. Although there will be some fixed costs the SCCA can cope with them, therefore they will not be making any charges to clubs for that period unless and until over the board chess is resumed. The proposal to adjourn the meeting was approved nem.con.

**Annual League Composition Meeting**

**1.Apologies for Absence**

Gordon Rennie

**2. The chair then proposed that the League Composition Meeting be adjourned *sine die***

The proposal was approved nem.con

**Extraordinary General Meeting (Resumed)**

**4. Surrey Correspondence Chess – a presentation by Richard Tillett**

Richard Tillett provided a Power Point presentation in respect of the Counties & District Correspondence Chess Championships. He invited Surrey chess players to join in the fun. Whilst it is a serious competition it is not to be taken too seriously. He gave a description of the competition mentioning that originally it was postal, then by email and is now on a web browser. Engine use is permitted on the basis that it would be very difficult to prevent them being used.

Two games would be played against the same opponents over the season. 10 moves must be made in each 30-day period and there is also a 14 day leave period allowed. At present 13 counties take part comprising of 176 players. Since he became the Correspondence Secretary in 2014 Surrey have had 2 teams, then 3 teams, then 4 teams and now 3 teams. For one season only they had 2 teams in the top division.

The recruitment process was described. Clubs are approached annually inviting chess players to take part. He was asked what is the point of playing correspondence chess if engines are used? In response he pointed out that it is possible for humans to exploit the use of engines and there were a lot of different drivers. The use of engines varies with players. Some players did not use engines and he would try to pair them against one another. He described what correspondence chess has to offer SCCA players pointing out that it was liked by some as it avoids the stress of over the board chess. It was also COVID-19 free!

The intention was to start the recruitment process earlier in future with better supporting material to help potential players. There is no charge to players who wish to take part.

David Sedgwick noted that there were 3 divisions but he thought that at one stage there had been an additional division. Richard Tillett said that he was only aware of there being 3 divisions.

Clive Frostick enquired who is eligible to take part? It does not seem to be formally set out anywhere and some players taking part were not based in Surrey. It was agreed that is the case as there are no eligibility rules. As an example Kent does not have a correspondence chess team and so some Kent players do play in the Surrey teams.

David Sedgwick suggested approaching clubs that were not in the SCCA but located in Surrey. Paul Shepherd thought that priority should be given to players who are members of SCCA clubs and Richard Tillett agreed.

Richard Tillett said that he may set up a friendly version of his presentation to send to SCCA clubs. Paul Shepherd requested that club secretaries distribute the presentation to their members.

John Foley enquired where were the results publicised? It is very difficult to find the details of the results on the C&DCCC website. Richard Tillett agreed and admitted that he had not yet got around to providing the details for the SCCA website but that is something that he will be doing. He was thanked for his presentation by Paul Shepherd.

**5.** **Clubs’ views on OTB chess resumption in light of ECF guidelines**

Paul Shepherd provided a Power Point presentation and started by giving a summary of the responses from the clubs. There had been mixed responses but with a majority not yet in favour of resuming over the board chess. He explained that there were particular non COVID-19 issues with the Surbiton venue.

Mike Gunn thought that the situation had changed and 30% to 50% of players were willing to resume over the board chess. At Guildford they were in favour of informal matches against other clubs and they could field 1 team. He thought that this was something that the SCCA should accommodate. Paul Shepherd responded by mentioning that the SCCA did not believe it appropriate to promote over the board chess matches for clubs at this time. However, individual clubs could arrange matches between themselves if they wish to do so but it would not be under the SCCA umbrella. Alan Scrimgour speaking on behalf Kingston said there might be a problem with away matches as fewer players may be willing to travel to another club.

Paul Shepherd then provided a slide about the COVID-19 Mortality Risk. He explained the data provided in the slide and mentioned the responsibility that the SCCA had not to spread COVID-19 to the wider community. Chess involved a high proportion of the older age group and they, especially males, were much more vulnerable than the general population. The risk could change rapidly and he gave Leicester as an example. The number of reported cases was rising in the UK and for example there were 1500 new cases reported on 27 August. There were also high levels of new cases in some European countries and change can come very quickly.

John Foley cautioned against a mistake when using statistics as life expectancy varied from birth to death. Paul Shepherd responded that he was not talking about life expectancy but the chances of surviving COVID-19. Put another way if someone becomes infected what are the chances of surviving?

Mike Gunn pointed out that older people die from many illnesses and people over the age of 70 need to take extra care. It is not the job of the SCCA to protect people as they should decide for themselves what risk they take on and the SCCA should allow them to get on with it. Paul Shepherd explained that the SCCA had a responsibility to the wider community. Over the board chess could cause exposure to other people not connected with chess. He stressed the importance of ventilation being far more important than wearing face masks. This will be a particular problem in the winter months. In taking into account the wider community if a chess player becomes infected following over the board chess that player would be traced. He understood the frustration about the SCCA not providing over the board chess but there was a need to be both cautious and prudent.

Peter Lawrence mentioned that the Dorking venue had stipulated that all doors, internal and external, must be kept open during play as well as opening windows.

David Sedgwick said that he agreed with Mike Gunn although he appreciated that there were not enough players for a resumption of the normal competitions. It should be left to clubs to arrange friendly matches and internal club competitions. Paul Shepherd agreed that they could do so but it would not be promoted by the SCCA in view of the risk to players and the wider community.

Michael Wickham was concerned about the legal position that may rest on a club resuming over the board chess but understood that the social distancing requirements maybe relaxed in November. There was no need to resume too soon.

A slide was then shown with a graph showing the level of new cases reported since March for several European countries. The recent rise in Spain and France was especially concerning. Paul Shepherd said that his slides would be provided when sending out the Minutes of the meeting. There was then a break in the meeting at

8:46 PM with the resumption at 9 PM.

**6. Composition of online friendly club competitions**

Huw Williams provided a Power Point presentation about the proposed SCCA online friendly club competition. The main issue had been anti-cheat software as he wished to have the option to turn it off. This could be achieved by using Tornelo as this software will provide the option to have or not to have the anti-cheat software operating. He explained his concerns about the anti-cheat software on other platforms and the difficulties that could create.

The intention was to use the same time controls as those used in 4NCL online, that is 45 minutes plus increments of 15 seconds per move. The games would not be graded but the current ECF grade of the players involved will be used for the purpose of deciding board order. The plan was to have divisions of 10 teams with four players per team. Players must be registered members of the clubs that they play for but they would not be prevented from playing if for instance they were abroad on holiday or could not return due to government restrictions. The Controller would be Huw Williams.

The deadline for entries was 7 September and it was hoped to start the competition in October. An entry form providing full details would shortly be sent to club secretaries.

Mike Gunn said that Guildford could be put down for 2 teams.

David Sedgwick wanted more information about the Tornelo anti-cheat software. Huw Williams advised that every game will be run through Stockfish by the software and he as the Controller could ask for a report if he wished to do so. He would not be doing so. The SCCA policy is not to run any anti-cheat software and that will be made clear to the clubs. He explained why he objected to the use of anti-cheat software and Paul Shepherd said that they will make sure that is understood.

Alan Scrimgour said that Kingston has managed to get only five players interested in playing in this competition so probably they will only be able to field 1 team.

John Foley enquired whether any suspicion of cheating can be reported? Paul Shepherd replied that there would be no anti-cheating software referral mechanism on the basis that it is a friendly league and so trust will be placed in the participants.

Russell Granat advised that Wimbledon did not wish to put forward a team, their rationale being that they wish to play only in graded competitions with the anti-cheat software running.

Richard Jones indicated that Ashtead hope to be able to enter a team by 7 September.

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David Howes enquired what will be the start time for matches. Huw Williams said the start time was likely to be 7:30 PM but that was still under consideration.

Dan Rosen explained that as this competition would be outside the scope of the Chess Disputes Committee, the rules would need to be framed to cater for that and other aspects.

Brian Skinner asked how this new competition will react with the Results System? Huw Williams replied that he would need to know how many teams take part first and they could then discuss what to do at a later time.

Paul Shepherd said that he would like the results to be on the SCCA website for Surrey players to view.

Michael Wickham said that he had experience running an online chess competition and if we get the Surrey online competition going it will build up its own momentum. He hoped this online competition could continue even after over the board chess resumes.

Daniel Young indicated that Wallington would have a problem playing on Wednesday evening. Huw Williams advised that clubs would be able to choose a different day of the week to play by agreement. There would be flexibility but he was still working out how best that can be achieved.

Richard Tillett thought the competition looked good and he did not think that cheating would be a problem.

Huw Williams asked clubs to go to the Tornelo website and see what is said about anti-cheating. In answer to a question from John Foley he explained why he chose Tornelo.

**7. Any Other Business**

On a non-SCCA matter David Sedgwick asked John Foley what the format will be for the London Chess Classic. He replied that he did not yet know the format but he did know that the London Chess Conference will go ahead probably using Zoom, though there may also be a small number of attendees, and Chess and Technology will be the theme.

Paul Shepherd said that he had been encouraged by the comments about online chess.

The meeting closed at 9:42 PM.