



Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein

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The 2021 London Outdoor Chess Festival

It's the London Chess Classic, but not as you know it. I am delighted to announce that Chess in Schools and Communities will be staging a three-day outdoor chess festival in London on Friday July 16th, Saturday July 17th and Sunday July 18th. I am working on securing venues and the program is being finalised, but save the dates.

Events will be themed around *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, as it is the 150th anniversary of the publication of Lewis Carroll's children's favourite. We'll have live chess and the unofficial British Giant Blitz Chess Championship played on giant sets in a test of chess skill, speed and stamina. There will be some tournaments outside or in marquees if the weather is inclement. More next month.

Step-by-Step

Over-the-board chess in the UK should return step-by-step in tune with UK Government guidelines with the key date being June 21st (at the earliest), when everything, hopefully, will open up. A 4NCL Congress from 9-11 July in Leamington Spa and the Northumbria Masters at the Novotel Newcastle Airport in August have already been announced.

Before then, no earlier than 17th May, some limited indoor gatherings will be possible with up to six people, which will give the possibility to play some internal competitions and even league matches involving the Hybrid Chess format – more of Hybrid Chess lower down. There is comprehensive guidance on the ECF website.

At the outset of the pandemic, the ECF Board, on which I sit, was concerned that the ECF could be bankrupted by the loss of revenue from membership, but all thanks are due to the ECF members who renewed their membership. On March 1st 2020 the ECF had 10,512 paying members; on the same date in 2021 there were 6,756. This represents a 64.2% retention rate.

Many took advantage of the offer made by Chess & Bridge of discounts on purchases when renewing and we will make another offer this year.

The timing of the relaxation of lockdown rules has forced the postponement of the British Championships and these have been delayed to October, and will take place piecemeal in a variety of venues. The booking of the popular Riviera Centre in Torquay has been pushed back to 2022.



Events this summer will be similar to the Barclaycard Yes2Chess finals and live chess display which took place in Hyde Park back in the summer of 2014. Once again, Chess in Schools and Communities will be organising and there will be events for agile adults, as well as children.

Gift of the Jab

No such problems in Israel where vaccination has proceeded faster than anywhere in the world. The Israeli Chess Federation took the opportunity provided by the successful roll-out to stage the national championship in Haifa for the first time in the second week of March. The tournament was sponsored by the Israeli national lottery and sanctioned by the government. All players and officials needed to have a 'green pass', which allows Israelis access to public events, theatres and museums.

This has got me thinking and I would be interested in readers' opinions. If I was playing a tournament in the near future, I'd certainly like the comfort of knowing my fellow competitors had been vaccinated, as even though I am getting my first shot, as I write, the day after tomorrow, I would want to be sure the tournament was being conducted with minimal risk to others. Of course, this raises the issue of how to handle junior players. For Hybrid events, being conducted in one room and socially distanced, having all players vaccinated would be very reassuring. I am seeking a legal opinion on whether organisers can demand proof of vaccination.

In the early rounds of the Israeli Championship an untitled player, Ohad Kraus, defeated GM Ilya Smirin and won this miniature:

O.Kraus-Y.Sokolovsky

Israeli Championship, Haifa 2021
Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♖f6 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 ♗g5 ♘e4 6 ♖xe4 dxe4 7 a3

7 e3?? ♚a5+ and in related positions has happened many times.

7...♚b6 8 ♗d2



8...e5

8...♚xd4 9 ♚c2 ♗c6 10 ♗c3 ♚d5 11 ♖d1 ♚e6 12 e3 gives White excellent compensation.

9 ♗c3 e3?!

9...♗c6 and if 10 dxe5 e3! or 10 d5 ♗d4 11 e3 ♗b3 was best.

10 fxe3 e4 11 ♚c2 ♗f5 12 g4! ♗g6



13 ♖h3! Heading for f4. 13 h4 was also strong.
 13...♗e7 14 ♖a4+ ♘c6 15 0-0-0 0-0
 16 ♘f4 a5 17 h4 ♖a6 18 h5 b5 19 ♖b3
 b4 20 hxg6 bxc3



21 ♖xf7+!! 1-0

A delightful and unusual finish. Black might have been sporting and played it out to allow the nice smothered mate with 21...♗xf7 22 gxh7+ Kh8 23 ♘g6#.

Two women opted to play in the open event and one of them, WGM Marcel Efroimsky, battled Israel's youngest IM Eytan Rozen for seven and a half hours and 233 moves in a game that ended an hour after the conclusion of the prize giving. Our regular contributor, IM Yochanan Afek, believes this is longest classical game ever played in Israel and the third longest game in the history of competitive chess.



The Golden Globes Awards, like so much over the past year, were forced largely online, but that didn't prevent Anya Taylor-Joy (aka Beth Harmon) from stealing the scene in her green Dior dress.



The last women's world chess championship took place at the start of 2020. Chief Arbiter Shohreh Bayat would head straight from Vladivostok to a new life in the UK after electing not to head back to potential trouble in Iran over her being photographed without a hijab.

Queen's Gambit Joy

The chess world can bask in even more of the reflected glory from the unprecedented success of *The Queen's Gambit*. The Netflix mini-series received two nominations at the 78th Golden Globes that celebrate achievement in the world of TV and film – and won in both categories.

The Queen's Gambit was voted best limited series anthology or TV movie and Anya Taylor-Joy, who plays the main character Beth Harmon, earned her first Golden Globe as best actress in a mini-series or motion picture made for television, as she beat off firm favourites Cate Blanchett (*Mrs. America*) and Nicole Kidman (*The Undoing*).

Woman of Courage

Shohreh Bayat is now safely ensconced in the UK with permission to remain and her

presence here greatly adds to chess life in the UK and we are honoured to have her. Shohreh is now our fourth Category A arbiter and the only one to have presided over a world championship match. Shohreh was forced to flee Iran when articles criticising her hijab appeared in the Iranian press. It was quite clear her life was in danger.

I and others engaged in some frenetic efforts early last year to assist Shohreh in gaining entry to the UK where she came from Vladivostok after the conclusion of the WCC Women's final between Ju Wenjun and her challenger, Aleksandra Goryachkina.

Shohreh's bravery has now been recognised by the United States Government in the form of Dr. Jill Biden, the First Lady no less.

On March 8th, U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken hosted the 2021 International Women of Courage (IWOC) Awards virtual ceremony to honour a group of extraordinary women from around the world. Dr. Biden delivered the following remarks to recognise Shohreh's courage.

"When Shohreh Bayat boarded her flight on her way to the 2020 Women's Chess World Championship, she had no idea she might be seeing her native Iran for the last time. Shohreh, the first female Category A international chess arbiter in Asia, was photographed at the Championship without her hijab visible, which is compulsory in Iran.

"Within 24 hours, the Iranian Chess Federation – which Shohreh had previously led – refused to guarantee Shohreh's safety if she returned to Iran without first apologizing. Fearing for her safety and unwilling to apologize for the incident, Shohreh made the heart-wrenching decision to seek refuge in the UK, leaving her husband – who lacked a UK visa – in Iran. In that moment, Shohreh chose to be a champion for women's rights rather than be cowed by the Iranian government's threats."

Guildford Go for Gold

As the magazine arrives with UK readers, the European Online Club Cup will be taking place with, for the first time, the UK's pre-eminent team Guildford taking part. Guildford have dominated the 4NCL in recent times, but never played in the European Club Cup. Having it online enables them to participate as third seeds behind Novy Bor of the Czech Republic and Russia's Mednyi Vsadnik.

Guildford will field the England team: Michael Adams, David Howell, Luke McShane and Gawain Jones, with Ivan Cheparinov on board five. Wood Green are fielding two teams and Celtic Tigers are also in the mix.



Carlsberg don't do chess clubs, but if they did we imagine the teamsheet would look a lot like Guildford's with all their England stars.

Hybrid Chess – Here to stay

Hybrid chess will become increasingly popular as it enables play over the internet while eliminating the possibility of cheating. It is arbiter-supervised play from a venue where many players gather to play against opponents similarly gathered elsewhere.

It had already been successfully trialled by the European Chess Union in junior events, but for the first time in early March, a Hybrid Chess event was approved by FIDE and also FIDE-rated. Teams from four cities played each other over four boards with a classical time control. The increment per move was 35 seconds instead of the usual 30, to account for players having to make their opponent's moves on the sensory board.

The victorious Barcelona team of five GMs (Edouard, Alvar, Peralta, Narciso Dublan and Moskalenko) played from the headquarters of the Catalan Chess Federation. Bratislava played from the Mayor's Palace, Malmo at the Hipp Theater, and Oslo at the Offerspill Chess Club that was founded by Magnus Carlsen in 2019.

Watch this space – in a world where the shadow of Covid hangs over us this format may be the answer and it's a whole lot cheaper than schlepping from one end of the country to another for a county or National Club match. Indeed, perhaps it could reinvigorate both competitions which have generally declined over the years. I could see Olympiads being played this way as well while the pandemic persists in some places. It certainly reduces the carbon footprint of a chess match.



It's a King's Indian, not a Tiger Modern! Tiger Hillarp Persson was, though, relieved just to be playing over-the-board chess when he turned out for Malmo in the first Hybrid Cities Cup. The event was a great success with the Romain Edouard-led Barcelona claiming top honours.



We'd love to see a UK chess player shortlisted for BBC Sports Personality of the Year, but Humpy Koneru has become BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year, seeing off competition from shooter Manu Bhaker, sprinter Dutee Chand, wrestler Vinesh Phogat and India's hockey captain, Rani Rampal, to the award. Humpy won the 2020 Cairns Cup after returning from a maternity break.



Wesley So has been living in America for many years and has now become a U.S. citizen. He is pictured with his proof outside the Citizenship and Immigration Services offices in St. Paul/Minneapolis. Fans of the Meltwater Champions Chess Tour have been able to see plenty of So playing from his home in Minnetonka, from where he is often accompanied by one of his cats and has even shaved on air during the Magnus Invitational which was under way as we went to press.