

MCCU AGM, 26 June 2010, 2.00pm

At Syston & District Social Club, Syston, Leics

Agenda:

1) Apologies

Graham Humphries, Andrew Farthing, David Carew, David Pardoe, Bruce Holland, John Hoddy, Matthew Pollard

Attending

Julie Johnson (JJ) & Cyril Johnson (CJ) (Leics), Mick Norris (MN) (Manchester), Peter Sherlock (PS) (Lincs), Drag Sudar (DS) & Robert Richmond (RR) (Notts), Peter Gibbs (PG) (President), John Pakenham (JP) (Warks), Andrew Leadbetter (AL), Andrew Davies (AD) & Matthew Carr (MC) (Staffs), Roy Hedges (RH) (Derbys), Ray Collett (RC) (Worcs)

2) Minutes of the MCCU AGM 2009

2.1) Accuracy

There was some doubt about which £100 item was amended on the budget, but it had no impact on the overall figures & the meeting agreed it was of little significance. Otherwise the draft minutes were accepted as accurate.

2.2) Matters Arising.

MN said he had received no clarification regarding the CRB issue he raised, but he appreciated that this had been contingent on responses from elsewhere.

CJ had raised the matter with the ECF Junior Director, he undertook to attempt to get clarification from other sources.

The meeting noted that the new Government had indicated that there would be some changes to what had been proposed by the previous regime with regard to additional ISA clearance procedures.

3) Reports:

3.1) President

PG gave a short verbal report, reiterating that he saw his role as that of a figurehead and sage advisor. He was happy with the current role in which the President is not a Board Member.

3.2) Chairman

CJ had nothing to report

3.3) Chief Executive

JJ had provided a written report.

She added to this by thanking everyone within the MCCU who had played a part in Union activities during the year, including officers & county captains.

Report Accepted

3.4) Secretary (vacant)

3.5) Finance Director

AL presented the accounts & passed the copy signed by the auditor to the CEO.

He explained that he had not billed the 2 smallest counties for the rebated levy of £4 each as he felt this was

not administratively worthwhile. He intended to bill these counties for 2 years combined.

He also explained that he had discovered that the Derbyshire BS deposit account was paying an extremely low interest rate. As his own county had an account paying somewhat more elsewhere he had withdrawn the funds to open a new account there. However, he found it was no longer possible to open an account of the same type, he could have opened an account in his name for the MCCU, but he did not feel this was satisfactory. The Board concurred & enquires did not locate any alternative account. As a result the funds had been deposited in the current account with a view to reviewing the situation when interest rates improve.

On query from MN, AL realised that part of his notes did not appear correctly on the accounts sheet. The county team entry fee had risen to £24 & £18 for 16 & 12 board teams respectively; this was set by the ECF. Game fee had also been increased at the ECF Finance meeting.

Report accepted

3.6) Director for Junior Chess

JJ reported that Graham Humphries had rung her last night. When she spoke to him 3 weeks ago he had been intending to come to the meeting as his legs had been healing well and he was expecting to get the all clear to drive again. (For those who are not aware he was away from home for several weeks in hospital/nursing home.) However an ulcer had broken out again on one leg this week, so he was unable to attend.

As a result of the above the MCCU have not run any junior events this year, although there has been other junior activity by way of the Chess Challenge & through some counties & individuals.

Yesterday & in earlier conversations Graham has expressed a willingness to assist the MCCU in any way he can & a wish to have something to do, whilst reluctantly accepting that someone else might wish to take on the junior post.

3.7) Grading Director

PS provided a written report & verbally highlighted the gradual increase in the number of county games graded & players taking part.

He also added that in taking the result detail from the website he had experienced some difficulty due to full names & grading references not being quoted on some results. The difficulty for a few captains is that they do not have web access & thus cannot draw detail from the online grading database. It was suggested that even those captains are likely to have a team member with access who could assist them with this. The meeting, having clarified that the result sheet includes fields for this data, suggested that the county teams controller stress the importance of this information. JJ the 2009/10 controller indicated that her experience with both this event & the National Club competition was that although such requests are made, they fall on some deaf ears. CJ suggested that his line from the ECF county stages of referring incomplete score sheets back to captains could be adopted.

There was also some discussion about the results form in connection with the website. RC indicated that this was mentioned in his Publicity/Webmaster report.

PS was asked if he had received queries on the gradings uplift, he indicated that he had not, but did not feel that any such queries would have been directed to him.

The possibility of the online grading system including the facility to drill down to results was raised. AL commented that this had been raised at the ECF Finance Council meeting in April & was not feasible as it would slow the site down too much.

Report accepted

3.8) Events Director

CJ provided a written report.

He highlighted his concern that the GP events were widely spread across the Midlands & few players were playing in more than 2 events.

Report accepted

3.9) Public Relations Director

RC presented a written report.

He stated that he had concentrated his efforts the website and this had left no further time to promote publicity initiatives. RC said that much more might be done to help publicise the game in the Midlands especially by ensuring that local papers receive press releases and photographs for events, but he did not have the time to undertake this work himself. RC asked the meeting to consider the website's publication policy and site maintenance. RC confirmed that he preferred to report congresses by publishing brief highlights on the MCCU site and provide a link to full results on a congress website. RC thanked county captains for their quick submission of results and the majority of congress organisers who had submitted results.

The meeting agreed that the current policy should be continued and site maintenance be conducted as his report suggested. The CEO would approach the previous webmaster, Sean Hewitt for information to facilitate site maintenance. It was agreed that rules for all MCCU-organised events should appear on the website. Organisers were encouraged to arrange for photography of prize giving ceremonies.

Report accepted.

3.10) County Teams

JJ provided a written report.

PS added that the Lincs U140 team had withdrawn due to the level of travelling which had caused difficulty in raising teams.

Report accepted.

3.11) Correspondence Chess:

3.11.1) Individual Event

Current table & explanatory note from controller Bob Veitch provided.

3.11.2) Team Event (vacant)

JJ indicated that there had been little interest in this event in recent years.

The National equivalent had also been contracting. CJ suggested reviewing whether there was any call for this to be revived.

3.12) MCCU Webmaster

Included within the Publicity report.

3.13) ECF

A written report had been provided by JJ & Andrew Farthing.

JJ read out an email from Andrew Farthing that had been sent in response to her preliminary comments to his report.

"Regarding your preliminary remarks to my ECF Report: I agree that it's unfortunate that the traditional summaries for Board and Council meetings haven't been posted on the ECF site. Detailed minutes were definitely produced for each meeting since October Council because I wrote them (until I relinquished the Acting Minutes Secretary role, with some relief, to Steve Williams in April of this year). The cause of the hold-up has been lack of time on Chris Majer's part. This isn't a criticism of Chris; I know how time-consuming the CEO role is, and Chris's day-job has been demanding his attention from early morning to 9 p.m. which has left little room for the ECF. Despite this, Chris has been putting in as many hours as possible into his responsibilities, but certain tasks have had to be "de-prioritised". It is hoped that in time the new role of Chairman will help in this regard, i.e. the Chairman will produce the meeting summaries. The net effect is that communication has been poorer, as you say. That said, some of the ECF Board members have been actively commenting on a range of issues on the English Chess Forum in the last 9 months, so there is some improvement in other respects.

It was remiss of me not to mention that Chris Majer had announced his intention not to stand for re-election in

October 2010, so thank you for mentioning this. I have been asked by several people whether I intend to seek nomination for the role of CEO (presumably because I'm currently Chris's alternate). I haven't definitively decided whether I want to stand - the prospect of giving up about 3 hours a day is a concern - and at the moment my feeling is that I don't. However, before I finally make up my mind, I would appreciate any feedback from the AGM participants as to whether my candidature would be welcomed by the MCCU."

The meeting discussed Andrew's request for feedback & voted to support him if he chooses to stand for the ECF CEO post.

PS commented that he had attended both the ECF AGM & Council meetings & felt that the atmosphere at the 2 had been quite different. He had been quite impressed by the new Finance Director Gareth Caller. Others who had also been present at the council meeting echoed this.

AL expressed some concern that the Certificate of Merit and associated material would not be the financial income saviour it had been held out to be.

MN asked if the content of Andrew's report could be disseminated further – it was agreed that Andrew would be approached to see if he was happy for its publication elsewhere.

Report accepted.

3.14) Non-executives

JJ reported that Andrew Farthing had emailed her indicated that he had nothing to raise that was not already included on the agenda.

JP stated that he had nothing to raise.

4) Elections:

- 4.1) President – Peter Gibbs re-elected unopposed
- 4.2) Chairman – Cyril Johnson re-elected unopposed
- 4.3) Chief Executive – Julie Johnson re-elected unopposed
- 4.4) Secretary - remains vacant
- 4.5) Finance Director – Andrew Leadbetter re-elected unopposed
- 4.6) Director for Junior Chess – no appointment *1
- 4.7) Director for Grading – Peter Sherlock re-elected unopposed
- 4.8) Director for Events – Cyril Johnson re-elected unopposed
- 4.9) Director for Public Relations – Ray Collett re-elected unopposed
- 4.10) Webmaster - Ray Collett re-elected unopposed
- 4.11) ECF Delegate – Andrew Leadbetter *2
- 4.12) Non-executives (max.2) – Andrew Farthing & John Pakenham re-elected unopposed

*1 The meeting felt that Graham Humphries' health situation had led to very limited activity in recent times. They did not feel this was likely to change. There was no nomination forthcoming. The Board was asked to search for someone to take on the post. Delegates were asked to pass details of any potential candidates on to the CEO.

*2 JJ reminded the meeting that a past AGM had decided that the CEO should be the ECF delegate. Whilst she was still willing to act in this capacity, she flagged up that as she will no longer be attending as ECF Minutes secretary, having resigned that post, her travelling costs would fall to the MCCU. Andrew Farthing had expressed a willingness to act as delegate. Andrew Leadbetter normally attends ECF meetings for Staffs & on enquiry from CJ expressed his willingness to be nominated.

5) Appointment of the Auditor.

AL reported that R Butters was willing to continue in this capacity, he was re-appointed.

6) Levy for 2010/11, Finance Director.

AL indicated that he would prefer to see the levy at the existing level with no rebate. He clarified that there are currently 43 level points across the Union.

After some discussion the levy was fixed at £10 a point.

AL was asked to explain how the levy points were allocated. Points per county are based on chess games

played by players in each county some years ago, the higher the activity the higher the points. It was agreed that the level of activity be reviewed to establish whether the current points allocation still reflected the activity. **The CEO, Gradings & Finance Directors to under take this exercise & publish the outcome** (PS indicated that the gradings information he has access to would enable such data to be extracted)

After some initial discussion on the budget completion of the debate was deferred until after item 9 as this may have some impact on the budget.

Having decided to have further prize money of £50 for a new Rapidplay Grand Prix, this was added to the budget. Donations were removed.

The budget was then approved.

7) Constitutional matters

The submission of proposals for this AGM had highlighted the fact that the constitution does not clearly state who may submit proposals.

In the last few years all proposals had been discussed on the basis that they were either submitted by a particular affiliated body, or were put forward by the CEO on behalf of an individual on the basis that they were deemed worthy of discussion. In previous years there have not been any proposals that the CEO regarded unworthy of being put forward, or ran counter to other proposals that the CEO wished to put. This was not the position this year.

JJ therefore invited delegates to consider whether they wish this unclear situation to continue, or whether they wished to amend the constitution to be more specific.

She stated that she personally had no wish to see discussion stifled, but as it stands the constitution does not seem to even prevent someone from outside the Union making a proposal.

If the meeting decided to make changes, it was for it to decide when these would take effect.

After brief discussion the meeting decided that it did not wish to expand the constitution on this matter & moved on to next business.

8) MCCU County Championship Rules

Various changes were proposed by different parties. Proposals had already been circulated & published on the MCCU website. It was for the chairman & the meeting to decide how to deal with the fact that there were differing proposals for the same areas. (See appendix containing the proposals and explanatory notes).

There was some initial discussion concerning how to approach the fact that there were differing proposals from 3 different parties. The meeting decided not to consider those put forward by David Pardoe, who was unable to attend the meeting to formally propose or speak to them.

The rule change proposals were basically taken in numeric rule order-

Rule 6 – proposed by Manchester re digital clocks

There was some discussion on the potential difficulties with such clocks; especially when used by those inexperienced in their use & setting up. The meeting decided to split the proposal into 2 parts, that of the basic principal to allow use of digital clocks where 2 captains agree, and the matter of the actual time controls to be used.

The meeting voted in favour of allowing use by agreement, but felt that some research was required regarding the use of incremental time controls. The controller & events director will undertake this work & report back.

CJ asked PC about the situation with blind players & digital clocks, PC advised that “glass” fronted clocks that do not allow the player to establish the time situation would present problems. It was concluded that a match involving a blind player would therefore preclude the use of digital clocks.

Rule 9 – proposed by Manchester

After brief discussion it was agreed to adopt this amendment.

CJ offered information he holds on potential neutral venues. RC suggested this be published on the website. This was agreed.

Rule 10 – proposed by the Controller.

JJ outlined that a problem had arisen at the end of the season that suggested the wording of the current rule was not as clear as it might be. However, she was happy to accept any variation the meeting might like to suggest.

After some discussion the meeting felt that it did not wish to be prescriptive regarding absolute time frames for submission of results, but to allow the controller discretion to deal with individual cases where problems arose.

JJ accepted an amended proposal that -

Within 7 days of the match a copy of the full score, as far as completed, shall be forwarded by the appropriate official of both counties to the County Championship Controller, who shall impose such sanctions as they see fit if this is not complied with.

This amended motion was carried.

Rule 11 – proposed by the Controller re mobile phones & electronic devices

proposed by Manchester re mobile phones.

JJ explained that unless the Union included something within the rules the FIDE rule would apply, but the FIDE rule was actually not reasonable. Her proposal is close to the FIDE rule, but makes it clear that the event allows phones into the playing area. There is another FIDE rules regarding other forms of noise, which someone suggested would cover other electronic devices, but it does not provide for any particular sanction. This proposal covers all electronic devices that could potentially cause disruption by making a noise.

MN explained that some players felt that losing a game through a single phone noise, potentially after travelling some distance & within minutes, was too harsh.

JJ raised a number of potential issues relating to the Manchester proposals, around responsibility for issuing warnings, which the rule does not specify; the disruption caused by issuing a warning to all during play; the issue that during play not all players are in the playing area at all times to hear a warning; & the inequity of punishing one player for the earlier infringement of another.

General discussion followed. PG was asked for his views as an arbiter. He agreed that issuing a warning on first noise to all players would cause undue disruption.

The meeting chose to adopt the Controllers proposal with slight amendment – player's phone in the second sentence to be replaced by player's electronic device.

The remaining rule changes were all proposed by the controller and were all accepted without debate.

9) MCCU Events for the Future

There had been informal discussions at previous meetings about whether the Union should hold other events. At one time there were 2 individual events, an Open & a Closed congress. Over the years there have been different approaches with the Union running these events themselves, allowing others to run the event both with an MCCU representative involved, and without. In addition some financial support has been given to others running the event in some instances.

Both individual events ceased after a succession of years where losses were incurred through subsidies &/or the MCCU running the event, a GM deciding that the drain on reserves should not continue. Since then the matter of revival of at least the Open has been raised informally at a couple of GMs, but delegates have not expressed any real desire for this.

Earlier this year the Board were approached with a view to awarding the rights to run the MCCU Open. Following discussion a majority of the Board were happy to grant such rights for a limited period, but felt that it should not do so for an extended period without reference to its' constituent bodies, or without advertising the availability of those rights & inviting applications.

Some interest has previously been expressed in a club event, but when an attempt was made to do so that interest did not translate into entries. The ECF Rapidplay event was held in the Midlands this season, but very few MCCU based teams actually entered, calling into question the viability of an MCCU event of this type.

The County correspondence event has not taken place for a few years, the National equivalent has been shrinking & several counties have been unable to find a volunteer to run a team, let alone the players to participate,

Delegates were invited to provide feedback on whether there is any genuine demand for revival of or further MCCU events, if so on what basis and which?

CJ & JJ highlighted that only 3 midland clubs had entered teams in the National club sections, 2 had entered the Rapidplay both winning prize money.

CJ will look to run an MCCU version of the team Rapidplay & in the absence of a Junior Director an individual event for juniors – he already has a venue in mind for this.

The meeting felt that the MCCU should not be taking the financial risk of running any congresses. There was little support for the suggestion of inviting applications to run a Midlands Open, the consensus was that Midlands Congresses could award the title to their Open winner on a rotation basis.

There was a fair amount of support for the idea of having awards for players lower down the grading order. Possible awards related to improved performance in the county team sections, and GP for lower grades were mooted. CJ suggested a Midlands GP for 1 day events with a prize of £50. PS indicated that the current grading system automatically produces performance ratings thus there would be little work involved in establishing awards for county team performance.

The award of the MCCU British qualifying places was raised by MN. JJ reminded the meeting that having been asked by the AGM 2 years ago, the Board produced proposals for this. However, last years AGM decided not to adopt these on the basis that there were then only 3 applicants for 3 places. RC asked about a place for the Worcester congress, CJ asked who was controlling it; RC believed it would be Ray Dolan. CJ indicated that he believed this would put the congress outside consideration because it did not have a qualified arbiter, JJ also believed this to be the case. RC will establish who will be controlling & report back to CJ.

The meeting approved the running of a GP for 1 day events with a £50 first prize.

The proposals for county performance awards & GP for lower graded players will be looked at by the events director in conjunction with the gradings director, & will report back to the next meeting.

10) Any other business

PS asked whether it would be possible to consider zoning county events with less than 8 teams to assist with travelling, which had been the main cause of Lincs withdrawing their U140 team. JJ felt that as there had been no advance proposal of this, the meeting could not consider a rule change at this meeting. The Chairman agreed. However, he suggested that if the teams involved were consulted & agreed, the controller should be allowed the discretion to do this. JJ remarked that in previous zoning cases where a team had withdrawn leaving only 3 teams, there had been complaints about a lack of games. CJ suggested that this could be remedied by a double round being played.

Some queries were raised about the ECF National county stages. CJ explained that where all 5 Unions nominate teams in a section, one of the first team nominees must be drawn away in the quarter-finals. During his time involved with the draw he tried to ensure that if a Union first team was drawn away in one section, it wasn't drawn away in other sections.

CJ was also asked why there would be no individual trophies at the county finals. He explained that in view of the ECF finances, the cost of the trophies & the fact that commonly several were simply left behind and never claimed, this was a sensible money saving decision. However, the ECF would be providing the refreshments FOC rather than teams paying for them.

11) Date/place of next meeting

It was agreed that the AGM would be held on 25th June 2011 at the same Lichfield venue as 2009 if possible.