

## COUNTY TEAM CONTROLLERS REPORT

Whilst in essence the event ran smoothly this season I have already mentioned the issue of defaults in my CEO report, which certainly presented problems this last season. We started the season with 30 entries, but Notts pulled their Open team out after conceding some matches. Leaving aside the Notts Open team, 5 other matches were conceded, compared to 2 the previous season. A total of 118 boards were conceded/defaulted. Messages from county captains over the past 2 seasons have indicated that they are finding it increasingly difficult to raise teams. A number of experienced captains have reached the end of their tether over the situation and have been lost, or indicated that they will not continue in post next season. All of these are of some concern.

Preparing the fixtures was something of a nightmare, an initial plethora of “dates to avoid” meant it was impossible to accommodate all requests. I asked for clarification on which dates were the most crucial in some cases & was able to compile the fixtures on that basis. However, the spell of bad weather we experienced caused real problems for some teams in rescheduling. In addition other captains found themselves realising that dates had not been included in county list of dates to avoid, again rescheduling caused some real problems. There were some issues caused by fixtures being rescheduled by captains without proper account of the fixtures of their other teams. The chess calendar appears to be getting more crowded. We cannot extend the county season as our nominations for the ECF stages must be made by 31<sup>st</sup> March, the start is dictated by the production of the grading list. This season the 4NCL had fixtures in late March which shortened the county season even further. Counties need time to study how the new grades fit with the sections & the people willing to act as captains. In order to allow time for teams to be organised & venues to be booked for the first fixtures we can't really start before October & the first weekend in October involves one of the major congresses in the Union. Whilst it is helpful to know which dates would be best kept clear of matches, I feel that counties must only list dates that will significantly affect them, otherwise the same problem will arise in the coming season.

The change to neutral venues as the default position where counties do not share a border does not appear to have caused any significant problems, teams appear to have been able to find venues where needed and there have been no disputes that needed my intervention.

There were rather more new captains than for several years, but again this did not seem to cause problems that needed the controllers intervention. I received very few queries on the rules and there were few problems caused by failure to read the rules. My thanks to the majority of captains for taking heed of the advice sent out prior to the start of the event.

It initially looked as though the fears of some that the top division of the Open would be reduced to 3 teams by the clarification/change in the rules would not come to fruition, with Notts re-entering the event. Unfortunately they had problems both in finding a captain & in persuading enough of their top players to commit to matches. Some disquiet has again reared its head over the MCCU having 3 places in the ECF Open stages. For those who are not aware of the issues, it is the split of our Open section into 2 divisions that is the cause, particularly with the lower one referred to as “Minor”. I successfully argued to the new ECF controller that, although our “Minor” division is used to decide who gets the MCCU nominations to the ECF Minor, the section is not actually run on the ECF minor grading limits and thus we genuinely have more than 5 Open teams in our event. Other Unions also make their nominations for the Minor from within their pool of Open teams, they simply don't split their Open team event into divisions.

Next season sees the introduction of a mid-season grading list for standardplay. The ECF have already announced that its' own events will operate on the basis of the Summer grading list dictating eligibility for the entire event. For the MCCU to do anything other than follow the same principle

would be a nonsense & would go against previous AGM views that the MCCU event should replicate the ECF in its' the main aspects. As our current rules already fit this principle, no change is needed. An ungraded player at the start of the season may have a published grading on the mid-season list, in which case there is nothing to prevent the controller declaring someone either eligible or ineligible on the basis of that list. Rule 20 states that a captain must have no doubt that the strength of a player does not breach the limits, I feel it is quite clear that a mid-season published grade is a clear indication of whether that is the case. Thus again we do not need to change our rules.

I have not replicated the county tables in this report, having decided that anyone who wishes can go the website for these. Instead I simply list the winners & qualifiers for the National stages -

Open Championship: Staffordshire Champions, Warwickshire & G Manchester

Open Minor: Lincolnshire Champions, Leicestershire

U180: Nottinghamshire Champions, Warwickshire

U160: Warwickshire Champions, Nottinghamshire, G Manchester

U140: Worcestershire Champions, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire

U120: Worcestershire Champions, Staffordshire Bulldogs, Warwickshire

U100: Warwickshire Champions, Nottinghamshire

The ECF semi-finals took place this weekend 11/12 June, I waited for those results before finalizing this report and sending it out. Unfortunately it appears that MCCU teams will be a little thin on the ground on finals day, However, Notts U180, Warks U120 & U100 teams will be carrying the flag for the Union, best wishes to them.

Julie D Johnson