



THE MIDDLE GAME

Volume 1, Issue 1

WELCOME TO THE MIDDLE GAME MAGAZINE

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Welcome to the first edition of the new official publication for the Midland Counties Chess Union. Whilst it is intended that local news will form the major proportion of items, National and even International events will also be included, especially where they have an impact on local chess.

Input from local chess players

I am interested in producing something that Midlands chess players actually want to read. I can only hope to achieve this if you tell me what you would like to see included. Whilst I have started out with various ideas for regular features, nothing is cast in tablets of stone. I would welcome suggestions and constructive feedback, it is the only way the magazine can evolve.

If you have any news you would like to see included please contact me by any of the means shown at the end of the column. I am happy to consider anything from a snippet of information, to a completed article. I

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SHOCK RESIGNATIONS AT BCF AGM

The recent BCF AGM was thrown into turmoil when the Chief Executive, Director of Finance (also Management Services) & Marketing Director all announced that they would not be standing for re-election that afternoon. The respective post-holders, Susan Richards, Robert McFarland and Nick Hawkins were thus effectively resigning from office.

Pressures of Office

Both Mrs Richards & Mr McFarland had been under some pressure in the weeks leading up to the AGM. Decisions made by both parties had been the subject of intense criticism. Mrs Richards had not endeared herself to various members of the Management Board, who considered that she had misrepresented some decisions taken at Board meetings. Mr. McFarland had been in some difficulties justifying some of his accounting decisions, to the extent that a



Has he really just received a BCF meeting mailing?

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can deal with disks or email attachments produced on a wide variety of software. I also have facilities to produce chess diagrams. Please bear in mind that I cannot guarantee to publish everything. I reserve the right to edit items or hold them over for a future edition.

I hope to include a letters section, but I do not intend for this to be a purely grumble and grouse opportunity. By all means if there is something you want to get off your chest, let's hear it! But, please let's have constructive debate rather than bar room brawl.

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County team cuts

Edit the old Bob Dylan song to read “Where have all the county teams gone?” and you might not be too far from the truth, if the worrying downward trend in the MCCU continues. This years competitions also seem to have been marred by late withdrawals of teams after the fixtures were published, and whole matches being conceded because of difficulties raising teams.

As a result the MCCU will have less qualifying places in the National stages, because these are based on the number of teams competing in the Union event.

An experiment was run, in which teams for the U175, U150 & U125 sections consisted of a minimum of 12 boards rather than 16. Teams reverted back to 16 by default, as no motion was put forward at the next AGM. The 2002 AGM did have a motion to reinstate the 12 board minima, but this was defeated. One has to wonder whether this decision had a negative impact on the number of teams competing in this seasons events.

Another factor appears to be difficulty in finding captains. When an existing captain steps down no one seems in danger of being trampled in the rush to take over. When a county feels it has enough interest to run an additional team, everyone wants to play in it, but nobody wants to run it.

Why is this? Is it because people haven't a clue what is involved? Or it is that they do know and find just certain aspects a problem? Would a workshop for prospective county captains address any “fear of the unknown” factors? Could a change in approach or rules eliminate off-putting elements?

Let's have some feedback to the letters page on this one.

See county results supplement at the rear

National Club Competitions

Having seen the first round draw for all 3 knockout competitions, Open, Major & Minor. I can only describe Midlands representation as pathetic. Only 4 of a combined total of 64 entries come from the MCCU area.

Yes, travelling is involved in these competitions, but Northern and Southern teams are prepared to play each other in the later rounds, (usually at halfway venues in the Midlands), so how much shorter the travelling all round if more Midlands teams were prepared to enter?

The prize fund has gone up over the last couple of years, with both winners and runners up getting prize money, and there are plate sections for the first round losers. This year the prizes range from £500 for the Open Winners, to £75 for the Minor Plate runners up. The format has been changed, with a limit to the average grading of the players in a team in the Major and Minor sections. This has introduced a lot more flexibility for smaller clubs who may not have 5 players fitting neatly into a grading band.

So why is the Midlands entry so poor? Are club members really less willing to travel than their northern and southern counterparts? Are our clubs really less well organized than elsewhere, or less enthusiastic to stir themselves to play in “foreign” parts, against players they may not otherwise meet.

CALLING PROSPECTIVE ADVERTISERS

Could you sell your products or services by advertising in this publication? With a distribution of 250 copies reaching all Midlands chess clubs, you could be reaching over 3,000 chess players. Our rates are £40 for A5 size, £20 for A6 size and £10 for A7 size, to cover 1 issue. Anyone wishing to advertise in the next 3 issues will receive a 10% discount on the above prices.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

41ST NUNEATON RAPIDPLAY

PINGLES LEISURE CENTRE AVENUE ROAD NUNEATON
8TH DECEMBER 2002
CONTACT ROY WOODCOCK TEL 024 7634 8097

BIRMINGHAM WINTER CONGRESS

PLOUGH & HARROW HOTEL EDGBASTON
4-5 JANUARY 2003
CONTACT NORMAN WENT TEL 01708 551617

WREKIN CONGRESS

THE COURT HOTEL
4-5 JANUARY 2003
CONTACT GC SHEPHERD TEL 01694 722580

MANCHESTER WINTER CONGRESS

WIGAN
27-29 JANUARY 2003
CONTACT PETER DODSWORTH TEL 0161 795 4856

CREWE

ROLLS ROYCE MOTORS WORKS CANTEEN PYMS LANE CREWE
7-9 FEBRUARY 2003
CONTACT J MCPHILIPS TEL 01829 770762

Your congress details could be here next time, Midlands events in the BCF Diary will be included anyway, otherwise send me your event name, venue, dates & contact details for inclusion FOC.

special committee had been set up to look at the Annual Accounts and make recommendations concerning the treatment of certain transactions. Disagreement between the committee and the Finance Director, concerning the recommendations made, ultimately led to the AGM deciding that the accounts should be reviewed by the Finance Committee.

Noticeable change in atmosphere

The atmosphere at the start of the meeting had been very tense. Clearly many feared an embattled affair. The announcements from Mrs. Richards & Mr. McFarland led to almost audible sighs of relief. It appeared that much of the potential for controversy and confrontation had evaporated. Many were sorry that Nick Hawkins felt that he must stand down in an apparent act of sympathy with his co-directors.

It is always regrettable when the best intentions of those volunteering to hold office do not turn out the way they, or the organization concerned, had hoped.

The 11th hour withdrawals meant that the BCF had to decide whether it could or should attempt to fill the posts at the AGM. Whilst nominations for the posts concerned could have been accepted at the meeting, it was decided that the BCF should step back & review its' structure, rather than making any hasty decisions.

The same attitude prevailed regarding the accounts, with the Finance Committee being tasked with carrying out a review and revision exercise. They will also cover the Finance Director functions pro tem. The President will cover the CEO functions.

Many delegates had gone along to the meeting, or had avoided doing so, expecting it to be a stormy affair, in which only a fraction of the agenda would be addressed. Instead the meeting was relatively good-natured, and all business was completed over half an hour before the normal cut off time for BCF meetings.

Storms there were, but not of the expected kind. The high winds and pouring rain, led to some participants, whom had travelled up to Leeds by train, being stranded there for 2 nights.

The BCF clearly has some hard thinking to do concerning the future. Hopefully it will be doing so in a calmer, more constructive frame of mind than has prevailed over recent months.

Obituary

It is sad to report the loss of a chess player in the first issue, something I will glad to receive few instances of.

From Staffordshire Chess Association,

Robert Ward was a very respected member in the local chess world, he was one of our long-standing Captains, having run the under 125 team since 1990 and led it to many victories. The team always reached the County Championship National Stages. He was a member of our Committee and 2 years ago received the highest honour Staffordshire could give, Life Vice President of the Association. He was a long-standing member of Wolverhampton Chess Club, and organized their Congress. In addition he organized and controlled the Dudley Congress and was co-organizer of the Wolverhampton Summer League from 1993. He also held the posts of President of the Cannock & District Chess League from 2001; Wolverhampton & District Chess League Vice President from 2001; and was its' President Elect. How he managed to combine chess, work as a Councilor for Wolverhampton, and also be a committed family man, we will never know.

He passed away on Saturday 26th October aged 49, leaving a wife Sue, and 2 daughters Alex & Sam. He was a very special gentleman, who will be sadly missed by us all. Our thoughts are with his family at this difficult time.

Oldies but Goodies

In contrast to the previous item, I am pleased to report on a senior chess player still taking an active role in Midlands chess.

My thanks to Michele Clack, the publicity officer for Redditch Chess Club for providing the information.

She tells me that one of their members, John Holmberg, is 83 years old and is the oldest active player in the Birmingham League. He first started playing in the Birmingham League around 1946. He worked abroad a lot, but kept up his chess in between times. About 10 years ago he settled with his wife in Redditch and joined the local club. At that time he was still taking contracts abroad as a metallurgist, and could not always play. He is always very keen to play

as much as possible and became a leading light at Headless Cross Chess club, another local club which has a number of members in common with Redditch.

When John joined the Redditch Club it was going through a bad patch, having been a force to be reckoned with only few years before. It had gone from having a strong team in Division 1 of the Birmingham League, to struggling in Division 5. By the time John arrived the team had picked up but was nowhere near Division 1. John suggested starting a new team in what was then division 10, using several players who were keen but not very experienced. He captained this team and took it up to Division 6, winning some division trophies on the way. He then suggested a 3rd team in division 8 (the Birmingham League having contracted somewhat by this stage), to give new junior members a chance. This team is still going strong and is now in Division 6, 2 junior players are now playing on or near the top boards for John.

The team recently won matches, with John winning his own game, to progress in the Barrington Trophy. John would dearly like to win this competition, having taken a team to the semi-finals twice. John is not the only driving force behind Redditch, Jason Cole and Jeff Heath, amongst others, have had a part to play in revitalizing the club. However, John's drive and enthusiasm have certainly been a big factor in the clubs' development into an exciting and competitive club, with 3 teams in the Birmingham League, now in divisions 2, 5 and 6, as well as teams in the County League and the Worcester & District League.

John's epitomizes that "never give up" attitude. If he's short of players he always seems to recruit someone to fill the gap. When the clubs' higher teams swallow up players he recruited, he takes it very philosophically and sees if there is anyone else who might like to play.

I know that John is not the oldest player still playing league chess in the Midlands. Our Leicestershire 91-year-old Alf Lenton, still playing, regards Mr. Holmberg as a mere whippersnapper. However, he may well have a claim to being the most active of his age group – unless anyone out there can tell me otherwise? Ed

Comic Cuts

Some of the more amusing and bizarre incidents connected with chess. If you have anything for inclusion in this section in future issues please let's have it.

This months gems come from Cyril Johnson (well I had to give him something to do as a penance for getting me roped into this job)

YOU NEVER KNOW WHO MIGHT BE STANDING BEHIND YOU

One incident which causes smiles in our household is when we recall a league match in which Julie's opponent, touched his queen, realized that if moving it, he lost it and waited a due time, about fifteen minutes, before moving a bishop. Julie smiled, with all the practiced charm of her profession (VAT inspector), and informed her opponent there were two things, possibly three he should know. He had touched his queen first, the league secretary has been standing behind him for twenty minutes, and she was married to the right hon. officer. The dismay on his poor face!!!! Caught between a rock and a hard place!

IF ONLY IT WERE THAT SIMPLE!

Arbiters get asked all sorts of questions, but this simple one turned out not to be quite what it first seemed. "Can I sacrifice a pawn please?" asked a lad in a junior tournament. A player after my own heart, I could see what he wanted to sac, but not how. His opponent was sent off to the tea bar with stopped clock. On being asked to show how he proposed to sac the g pawn, he picked it up, and put it in his pocket! One remembers the pocket knight, but not the pocketed pawn!

Correspondence Chess

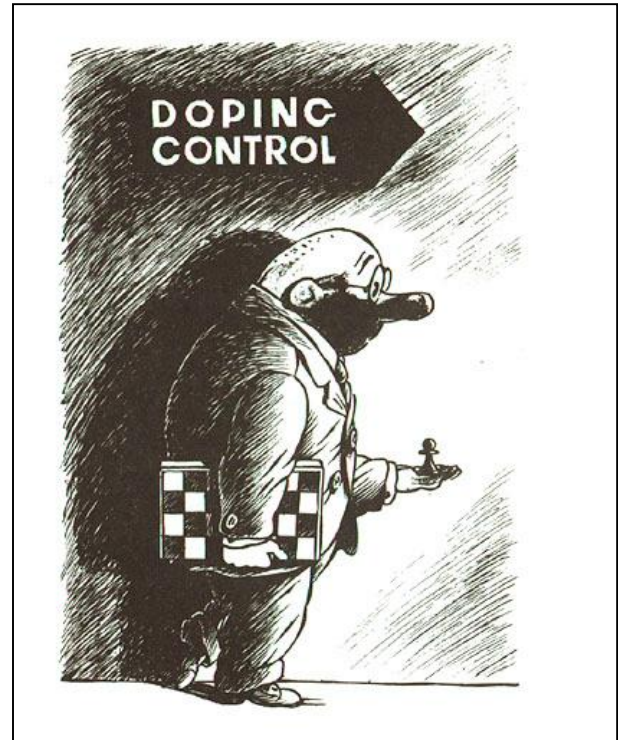
The MCCU Individual Counties Correspondence Championship would normally have been completed by now. However, the destination of PC Gibbs Trophy lies in the hands of adjudicators. Phil Adams has 7 points, but Brian Briscoe has 6 points and is claiming a win in the adjudicated game. Thus if he succeeds in his claim the title will be shared.

WHAT'S THAT ABOUT READING NOTICES?

The Quick play finish has caused semantic problems. I remember seeing a county match where the position was repeated 10 times, where both sides missed mate 3 times, before exhaustion took the form of offering a draw. The rules were on the walls, but neither captain nor players had bothered to read them!

WHAT'S THAT ABOUT READING PAIRINGS CHARTS?

The pairings rules also cause problems, not always of the arbiters making. One remembers a player who walked into Round 1 of the H E Atkins Congress, saw his number in the Minor was 4, found board 4 (in the Open), sat down, played, was destroyed, and left. (A grateful opponent thought he had been given 240 grading points.) He came back the next morning, and tried to sit down on an occupied board 4 in the Open again! It took 15 minutes to work out what had happened! He played one more round, in the Minor then left!



I'm not so sure getting chess recognised as a sport was such a good idea.

So You Think You Know The Rules?

The first in a series of articles by qualified arbiters on commonly misunderstood or misinterpreted laws.

With thanks to John Robinson FIDE Arbiter

The LUCK of the DRAW

Stalemate aside, reaching a draw in a game has a number of twists everyone knows – or do they? How often have you been offered a draw whilst contemplating your next move? And are you quite sure how the threefold repetition of a position works?

Unless you have the move, you have no rights. If you wish to offer a draw you should make your move on the board and speak before pressing the clock. The offer cannot be withdrawn and remains open until your opponent rejects it orally, or touches a piece committing him to moving or capturing that piece. Nevertheless if the draw is offered after pressing your clock it is still valid, but you may have fallen foul of the law forbidding you to distract your opponent. If he is deep in thought with little time left he will not appreciate your interjection and an appeal to the arbiter could result in some penalty for you – probably a little extra time on your opponent's clock. But even if you observe the rules an offer draws in the approved manner, it can be overdone – distraction again. This is one reason behind the recent introduction of the requirement to note any draw offer on the scoresheet thus: (=). The indication also helps to avoid any misunderstandings as in the exchange "Would you like a draw?" "Oh yes please, two sugars!" which sounds apocryphal, but isn't.

Again everyone knows that a draw may be claimed on the threefold repetition of a position, but here it is absolutely essential that you have the right to speak. If your opponent's move results in a position that has occurred twice previously, the game is drawn (subject to certain qualifications), you should you point out this fact, (which should be backed up by the up to date scoresheet, or sometimes during a time scramble by a watching arbiter's notes).

But if your move will result in the repetition it is vital that you do not make the move on the board. It should be written on the scoresheet, if there is an arbiter present,

he should be called, and the clock stopped. The certain qualifications referred to above will then be checked.

Will the position of the pieces on the board be identical to the position at two previous points in the game?

Does the same player have the move in all three cases? In a claim made during the 32nd Olympiad in 1996 the claimant's captain insisted that the translation of the International Laws published in his language omitted this requirement. Well maybe, but the English version of the Laws is definitive and his claim failed because in one of the repetitions Black had the move and in the others White.

Are the same options available at each of the three occurrences? If castling was possible the first time, but prevented on the third by reason of intermediate moves of the king or relevant rook, your claim is dead as it also is if an en passant capture was possible at the first occurrence.

It used to be possible to lose a game by the incorrect claim of a draw by repetition, when such an incorrect claim incurred a deduction of five minutes from the claimant's clock – Simple, but tough if less than five minutes remained! So now we have a Complex legalistic compromise. An incorrect claim incurs an **addition** of three minutes to the opponent's remaining time **plus a deduction** of up to three minutes on the claimants remaining time. If the claimant's clock is down to a minute or less there is no deduction. If he has between one and two minutes he is left with precisely one minute. If he has between two and six minutes his penalty is a reduction in his time by 50%. With more than six minutes left he loses the full three minutes.

The compromise was bought in by FIDE in 1996 and amended to the form above in 2000. It has its critics and may well have been amended during the recent meetings in Bled, any amendment would probably come into force in a year or so time, but a reversion to the original rules seems unlikely.

What about claiming a draw during a quickplay finish when your time is running out but opponent can't win by normal means? That's another can of worms, hopefully to be covered by another contributor in a future issue.

Other arbiters will be invited to cover different topics in future issues. If there is anything you would particularly like to see included, please let me know.

Junior Chess Scene

With thanks to Graham Humphries the MCCU Junior Director.

UK Chess Challenge Terrafinal 2002

It is pleasing to note that 10 of the 34 players contesting the Terrafinals were from the MCCU area.

They finished as follows: -

PLACE	AGE	NAME	COUNTY	PTS
3rd	U15	Chris Dorrington	Lincs	13
5th	U13	Li Wu	Warks	12
7th	U13	Simon Fowler	Salop	12
9th	U15	Sabrina Chevannes	Warks	12
11th	U14	Paul Lam	Warks	11
13th	U11	Ankush Khandelwal	Notts	9
14th	U11	Michael Keetley	Notts	9
20th	U9	Louis Graham	Salop	9
25th	U10	Amisha Parmar	Notts	6
27th	U8	Toby Thurgood	Notts	6

Ankush Khandelwal, whose grade is 109, took some notable scalps in amassing his 9 points, beating Chris Dorrington 189 & Sabrina Chevannes 157. He only lost one game and his draws included players graded 163, 154 & 122.

Challengers Section

9 MCCU players competed in the Challengers section of the event. Only those scoring 4 or more points appeared on the published results.

Kishan Lakhani of Notts & John Emmanuel of Warks both scored 4 points. Maxwell Turner of Leics, Vishal Patil, Dani Malik of Warks, Charlotte Wilcox of Staffs, & Joel Lamy, Daniel Cartledge & Lateefan Messam-Sparks of Notts were the other Midlands representatives.

Roll of Honour

Certificates were awarded to schools who have taken part in the competition for a number of years, with high numbers entering. St.Edwards Middle School in Leek & Nottingham High both received Platinum awards for 7 years of participation; Orme House Newcastle under Lyme received a Gold award for 6 years. All 3 schools have 60 or more pupils competing in the initial stages.

English Primary Schools Chess Championships 2002

A number of Midlands Counties were represented in the EPSCA events.

In the U9's Notts finished joint 4th; Lincs 10th; Gtr Manchester 12th & Salop 15th.

Notts were also 4th in the U11 section, with Gtr Manchester 6th; Lincs 8th; & Birmingham 16th.

Gtr Manchester were runners up in the Girls U11, with Notts 3rd & Lincs 4th.

The Audio Chess Grand Prix covering all the events saw Notts placed 3rd; Gtr Manchester 4th; Lincs 8th; Salop 22nd; Leics, Northants & Birmingham joint 26th; & Derby 33rd

N.Y.C.A Events

Warks performed superbly in the recent events, they won the U16 tournament, were runners up in the U18 & came 3rd in the U12

E.C.G.C.F Finals

Staffs competed in the U14 finals of the English Counties Girls Chess Federation finishing a creditable 3rd.

MCCU Events

The U18 event will be on February 15th 2003 at Syston. Graham Humphries is willing to organize other junior events if there is a demand. If you have any requests for team events covering other age groups, or individual competitions please get in touch with Graham on 01384 571486.

Juniors Players

The number of counties entering teams in Junior events has picked up from a very low level, but is still disappointing. It is interesting to note that the latest gradings list indicates that several counties who do not currently field teams, actually have more than enough graded juniors to do so. Most will also have ungraded youngsters to call on as well. What is it that is preventing some counties from participating? It is lack of organizers? Transport problems? Or is it something else we are not aware of and could possibly do something to solve?

